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HISTORY OF THE FIRST  
SETTLEMENT OF HALL COUNTY,  
NEBRASKA







# Nebraska History

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

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SPECIAL ISSUE

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1946

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## History of the First Settlement of Hall County, Nebraska

by

William Stolley

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PUBLISHED BY

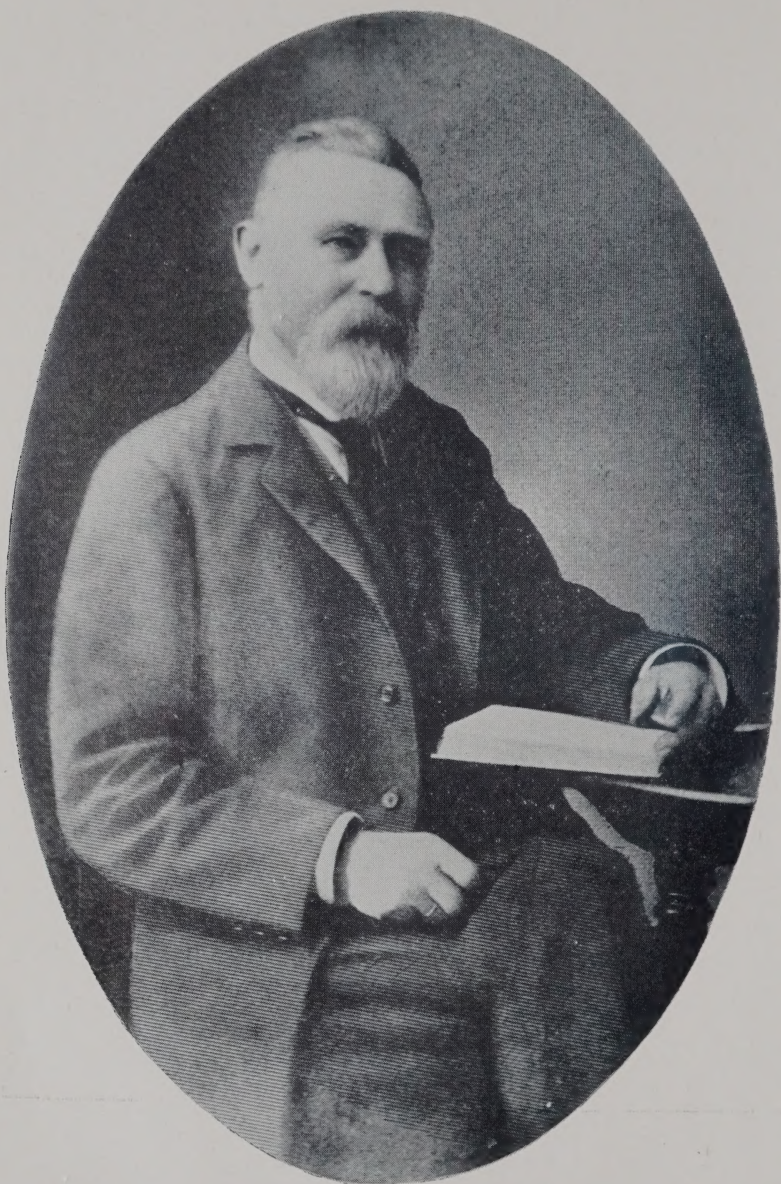
Nebraska State Historical Society











The author, William Stolley, from an oil painting owned  
by the Stolley family

# NEBRASKA HISTORY

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## History of the First Settlement of Hall County, Nebraska

by  
William Stolley

Translated from the German  
by Harry Weingart

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Printed April 1946

Price Fifty Cents



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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

The *History of the First Settlement of Hall County Nebraska* by Stolley was published in German in 1907, and no English edition has been offered to the public until this publication.

According to an agreement entered into by the late Dr. A.E. Sheldon on October 22, 1941, with William A. Stolley, son of the author, Dr. Sheldon, as superintendent of the State Historical Society, agreed to translate and publish as an issue of *Nebraska History* the *History of the First Settlement of Hall County in Nebraska*, including the full text of William Stolley's history translated from German into English.

This publication should have been completed on or before February 1, 1942. Owing to a succession of difficulties and circumstances over which he had no control Dr. Sheldon was unable to complete the work by that time. Because of the historical value of the account and inasmuch as W. A. Stolley had already contributed funds for the translation of the work, part of which had been expended, it seemed that the project should not be dropped. War conditions and the scarcity of paper with limitations upon the quantity of printing made it impossible to push the work during the war period.

The terms of the agreement have therefore had to be modified owing to the war exigencies and the loss of Dr. Sheldon who originally contemplated this undertaking. Despite these unforeseen circumstances and delays to the undertaking, the Historical Society is now attempting to carry out the spirit of this agreement. It is therefore presenting the *History of the Settlement of Hall County* as a special issue of the magazine. Our members are chiefly indebted to the efforts of W. A. Stolley, E. G. Stolley, and to Dr. Sheldon for this special number.

The chief editorial work was completed by Dr. Sheldon. The translation has been examined and corrected by August Brauer and by Dr. Lydia E. Wagner, recently a member of the Modern Language Department of the University of Nebraska.

William Stolley, the author of the *History of the Hall County Settlement*, was a personage of remarkable talents and versatility. He was born April 6, 1831 in Segeberg, Germany, the son of Frederick and Abel Stuhr Stolley. His father was a distinguished teacher and his mother came from a family of distinction and wealth. He had a diversified training in his father's school and in cabinet-making. His brother George was a naturalist, and William's knowledge and skill as an assistant to his brother rated him as a skilled technician in the field of biological science.

In the Schleswig-Holstein uprising of 1848 he participated as a sharpshooter. A year later, April 9, 1849, he sailed from Hamburg with three of his four brothers for New Orleans, arriving after a two months voyage. The party of some seventy Germans proceeded via St. Louis to Davenport, Iowa. After traveling three years with his naturalist brother in Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, and Tennessee he became a partner in the mercantile firm of Hagge and Stolley at Davenport. The financial crisis of 1857 wiped out a large part of the firm's assets through the bad debts of their patrons. This in part accounts for the enterprise which Stolley so ably describes in the *History of the Settlement of Hall County in Nebraska*.

From this point on the career of William Stolley was largely merged with the story of the Hall County settlement of which he was the leader<sup>1</sup>. He remained a leading citizen of his community until his death May 17, 1911.

The authority of William Stolley as the leader of the Grand Island settlement is shown in the agreement that he drew with the financing company. It is further revealed by the power of attorney extended to him by B. B. Woodward for the company. A copy of these two documents is herewith included.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "William Stolley in 1856 and 1857 was the leader of the Holstein Colonization Company that settled Grand Island in Nebraska." August P. Richter, *Geschichte der Stadt Davenport*. (Davenport, 1917), 468. Richter was a resident of Davenport and had first hand knowledge of the colonization venture.

<sup>2</sup> The text of these documents is taken from "The Original German Settlement at Grand Island, Nebraska," Esther Bienhoff, Manuscript Thesis, University of Nebraska, 1929, p. 83.

"This agreement made this 23 day of Mar., A. D., 1857<sup>3</sup> between A. H. Barrow, B. B. Woodward and W. H. F. Gurley of Davenport, Scott Co., Iowa, of the first part and William Stolley of the same place of the second part Witnesseth that the said second party agrees to claim Three Hundred & Twenty acres of land in the Territory of Nebraska at or near the town of Grand Island City with said tract of land of Three Hundred & Twenty acres the second party further agrees that said first parties hereunto shall have one half of said claim and said second party the other half of said claim adjoining the boundary line of said Town of Grand Island City & to be selected by said second party, upon consideration that said first parties enter or furnish the means for the entry of the whole amount of said claim And in consideration of the agreements above made by the said second party they will convey to the said second party one Hundred (100) Town lots in the Town of Grand Island City to be selected in some equitable mode, to be hereafter agreed upon between said parties and will furnish means for the entry of said claim of Three Hundred & Twenty (320) acres, when the same shall come into market.

Signed:

William Stolley  
A. H. Barrow  
B. B. Woodward  
W. H. F. Gurley

Power of Attorney: Davenport Iowa 23 Jan'y 1860

I hereby authorize William Stolley to receive any monies which may be due me from the settlers at Grand Island City N. Terr on account of clothing sold them and to receipt for the same and also to authorize him to settle

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<sup>3</sup> Some question has been raised as to the correct date of the contract. In Heinrich Egge's *Diary*, a contemporary account, there is evidence of an earlier contract, to some provisions of which, he, and others seeking to join the colony with him, could not agree. Egge writes ". . . I could not immediately agree to this contract and so asked time to think it over until the next morning, the 2nd of May, . . . and so went later to the lawyer Hedde where I also met Stolley and there I talked it all over again. . . and went over the contract. The same evening we had a meeting to present our terms to the company." The date of May 23 cited by Miss Bienhoff seems to be a typographical error in copying from the original manuscript.



with said settlers by note for any other indebtedness which may be due me.

B. B. Woodward  
for the Company

It is surprising to find such general responsibility imposed upon a leader at the early age of twenty-six. It gave him a future of more than fifty years of service in which to build up the community which he did so much to found.

J. L. Sellers

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF OUR FATHER,  
WILLIAM STOLLEY

The contents of this booklet are a realistic recitation of historical facts covering the birth and growth of the first pioneer settlement of Hall County, Nebraska.

It may not be amiss at this place and time, to relate briefly, the circumstances which caused the German migration from the homeland to America in the year 1849. The province of Holstein was the native home of the majority of members taking part in the 1857 settlement, and these settlers were fugitives from the iron heel of Prussian militarism.

Flames of resentment flared high on the part of the Holsteiners—showing open rebellion against this high-handed procedure. However, in thorough Prussian style, all opposition was stamped out and many of the best Holsteiners sent for long terms to military prisons.

Father, who had served as a volunteer in the Holstein army, decided, together with many others, including Carl Schurz, to migrate to North America—to escape the clutches of Prussian saber rattlers.

After floundering around for two long weary months on the high seas, the wooden sailship carrying the immigrants docked at New Orleans—this taking place sometime during June, 1849. But, before arriving and while still on the Gulf of Mexico, cholera broke out on board ship, claiming 30 out of every 100 immigrants. Thus these German wanderers at last touched the shores of the promised land.

Simultaneously with the Semi-Centennial Settlement Celebration, which occurred on July 4, 1907, at Grand Island, father caused the publication of the Original History of Hall County in German, explaining in his preface why he chose this language instead of English.

As time moves along the trail of tradition and while the western sun is dipping ever lower, it becomes our privilege as well as our pleasure to offer the American reading public a true and complete translation.

Being duly chosen organizer and leader of the 1857 Colony, father naturally knew the vital circumstances, the living and true history of the early pioneering of the county. As historian, he was fortunate to have at his command exhaustive books of records—made by himself, personally, from the very beginning and during the formative period of the settlement, thus rendering a history free from basic error or shoddy counterfeit.

In connection with this publication, we feel deeply obligated to Dr. A. E. Sheldon, former superintendent of the State Historical Society of Nebraska, Mari Sandoz, who supervised the translation from the German to English, and Myrtle D. Berry and J. L. Sellers who completed the editorial work and the publication.

May the American reading public of the present generation and especially those clustering in and around our Old Home Town, Grand Island, extend a friendly welcome to this tale of pioneer life—telling in vivid and characteristic style of those stirring days of long ago—a story rekindling the camp fires of the old West.

W. A. Stolley, Dowagiac, Michigan

E. G. Stolley, Grand Island, Nebraska





Mr. and Mrs. William Stolley, from an oil painting made about 1856. Copies from the originals were presented by the Stolley family.



Mr. and Mrs. William Stolley, from a daguerreotype taken in 1859.



## Preface to the German Edition

Since the Fiftieth Anniversary of the "Pioneer Settlement" of our (Hall) County is to occur on July 4, 1907, and since all living original settlers are requested to report to the committee on arrangements all reminiscences and records which have a connection with that early period and are based on facts. And, since these contributions to the history of that earliest period of settlement are to be published in the English language, I deem it only proper that a competent person should arrange to have this factual and authentic history appear in the mother tongue for the benefit of the German population in this community. The original founders of the settlement of Grand Island were exclusively Germans, and, for the most part, from Schleswig-Holstein; while the present population of the city and county is largely German or of German descent.

In view of these facts, as stated above, I invite a friendly reception of this booklet.

MARCH 21, 1907.

William Stolley





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## CHAPTER I.

### ORIGINAL SETTLERS

Origin of the first settlement in Hall County in Nebraska; whence the first settlers came; their names and nationality, and under what conditions they took part.

It was in the winter of 1856-57 when A. H. Barrows of the Davenport, Iowa banking firm, Chubb Brothers and Barrows—a branch bank of the Chubb Brothers and Barrows banking house of Washington, D. C.—offered me an opportunity to participate in the speculative enterprise of founding a town in the Platte Valley, in the center of the Territory of Nebraska.

Mr. Barrows assured me that wealthy capitalists and influential people, including even congressmen, would aid in the project. These men assumed that sooner or later a railroad would be built up through the Platte Valley which, upon completion, would cross the continent, and since the national capital would probably be moved from Washington to a more centrally located spot in the United States, in all likelihood it would be established at this place, near the middle of the continent.<sup>1</sup>

To carry out this plan a considerable portion of land in the interior of Nebraska was to be secured, in order to establish the "New Washington." It was proposed to send one surveyor and

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<sup>1</sup> The promoters may have used the dream of a re-location of the National Capital to induce settlers and investors to take part in the enterprise, but it seems evident that the backers were counting most strongly upon the location of the future Pacific railroad through their settlement for a profit on their investment. Joshua Smith, one of the American members of the colony, in a letter dated November 9, 1857, stresses the advantages of the north side of the Platte as a route for the proposed railroad, but makes no mention of capital removal.

"A party of five of us left Davenport. . . . expecting. . . . to make our everlasting fortune in an incredibly short space of time."

Letter of Joshua Smith, written from Davenport, November 9, 1857, printed in the *Grand Island Independent*, November 22, 1926.

four or five men to lay out the town. The interior of Nebraska had not as yet been surveyed, the government survey extending only as far as Columbus and the Loup River country.

The land north of the Platte River had just recently been deeded to the United States by the Pawnee Indians,<sup>2</sup> while the Sioux Indians claimed all the land south of the Platte along the Blue and Republican Rivers.

Although I declined the offer to become a member of the Town Company, I agreed to personally take part in the founding of the new colony and to undertake its organization, on condition that in addition to the proposed surveying party of four to six men, twenty or thirty vigorous young men would be added who would be provisioned and armed for one year, enabling the settlers to defend themselves in case of an attack by hostile Indians. My suggestion was accepted by the Town Company and later carried out. On my request and recommendation, Fred Hedde was later chosen to assist me and to help secure the number of young men I had suggested for our settlement.

Members of the Town Company who were personally known to me were A. H. Barrows, W.H.F. Gurley and B.B. Woodward.

According to a Territorial Law, which was later declared unconstitutional, each settler was entitled to take possession of 320 acres of land.<sup>3</sup> Relying on this law, the pioneer settlers of Hall County were engaged by the Town Company under the following conditions:

1. Every participant in the undertaking obligated himself to claim 320 acres of land wherever the Town Company's surveyor should direct.

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<sup>2</sup> A strip of the north bank about sixty miles long, "to the crest of the bluffs", was included in the Grand Island cession of 1848. Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, II, 571.

According to Smith, this desirable strip was generally overlooked by prospective settlers under the impression that it was Indian land. A Washington member of the Town Company had obtained the information, and it was decided that "somewhere along Grand Island" would be the best location for their town. Smith Letter.

Other Pawnee lands north of the Platte were ceded in September, 1857 (After the town site had been established.) *Nebr. St. Hist. Soc. Publications*, XXII, 20, 23.

<sup>3</sup> The Nebraska Claim Club Act passed by the First Territorial Legislature attempted to legalize the rules of the Claims Clubs existing in the Territory at that time. The allocation of 320 acres of federal land was clearly contrary to federal law and so was void. *Nebr. St. Hist. Soc. Publications*, XXII, 33, 34.

2. The Town Company was to furnish the full amount of money to buy and pay for all the surveyed land, and each settler contracted to deed half of the claimed land to the Town Company, retaining only 160 acres for himself.

3. Each pioneer settler was also to receive ten lots in the proposed new town.

4. Settlers without money were to be furnished provisions by the Town Company at cost price which they (the settlers) agreed to pay back as soon as conditions permitted. <sup>4</sup>

These were the main points of the original contract between the Town Company and the pioneer settlers of Hall County. The following named persons participated in this venture as true pioneer settlers:

R. C. Barnard, Company Surveyor of Washington, D. C.  
Lorenz Barnard, of Washington, D.C.  
Joshua Smith, of Davenport, Iowa.  
David P. Morgan, of Davenport, Iowa.  
Wm. Seymour, of Davenport, Iowa.

These were the five Americans who took part.

William Stolley, from Holstein, Germany.  
Friedrich Hedde, from Holstein, Germany.  
William A. Hagge, from Holstein, Germany.  
Henry Joehnck and wife Margarethe, from Holstein, Germany.  
Christian Menck, from Holstein, Germany.  
Cay Ewoldt, from Holstein, Germany.  
Anna Stier from Holstein, Germany.  
William Stier and wife from Holstein, Germany.  
Heinrich Egge, from Holstein, Germany.  
Heinrich Schoel and wife, from Holstein, Germany.  
Peter Stuhr, from Holstein, Germany.  
Hans Wrage, from Holstein, Germany.  
Marx Stelk, from Holstein, Germany.

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<sup>4</sup> The contract undoubtedly provided that the company should advance provisions for *one year*. Andreas, *History of Nebraska*, 931; Stolley, "Dream of Future National Capital," *Grand Island Independent*, June 29, 1907.



Fried. Doll and wife, from Holstein, Germany.  
George Schulz, from Holstein, Germany.  
Friedrich Vatte, from Holstein, Germany.  
Johann Hamann, from Holstein, Germany.  
Detlef Sass, from Holstein, Germany.  
Nicholas Thede, from Holstein, Germany.  
Cornelius Axelsen, from Holstein, Germany.  
Christian Andresen with wife and daughter, from Schleswig,  
Germany.  
Heinrich Schaaf, from Prussia, Germany.  
Mathias Gries, from Prussia, Germany.  
Friedrich Landmann, from Mecklenburg, Germany.  
Theodor Nagel, from Waldeck, Germany.  
Herman Vasold, from Thuringia, Germany.

Thus the first settlers of Hall County, Nebraska were participants in this extreme outpost of settlement, since the country west of Columbus to California, was uninhabited by white people (except for garrisons in the government forts, and the Mormons at Salt Lake in Utah). These original settlers included five Americans, twenty-five German men, five married German women, one grown-up German girl, one German child (Linda Andresen) four years of age; making thirty-seven persons in all.

## CHAPTER II.

### FROM DAVENPORT TO GRAND ISLAND

Organization. Trip from Davenport, Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska; from Omaha to the Wood River; establishing the location of the settlement. Construction of the first houses. The city Mendotte.

The surveying party consisting of R.C. Barnard, the Company's surveyor, the other Americans and Friedrich Hedde and Christian Menck—the latter two driving a team belonging to the Town Company—left Davenport, Iowa, a few days before the main caravan.<sup>1</sup>

William Hagge and Theodore Nagel, aboard a Mississippi steamboat, went to St. Louis to purchase provisions, firearms (24 muskets and 6 rifles) and ammunition, also the blacksmith tools and other necessities. They took a Missouri River steamboat from St. Louis to Omaha where they were to meet the main caravan.

On May 28, 1857, the main party left Davenport under my leadership, with five heavily loaded wagons, drawn by nineteen yoke of work oxen.<sup>2</sup> Weather conditions on our journey through the state of Iowa being favorable, my company arrived safely in Omaha on June 18, 1857, and continued on westward the following day. Business matters, partly in the interest of our future settlement, compelled me to transfer the leadership of my train to surveyor Barnard<sup>3</sup> in Omaha, and I returned to Davenport by way of St. Louis and Chicago.

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<sup>1</sup> The advance party left Davenport May 26, 1857. Smith Letter.

<sup>2</sup> Egge says "we had sixteen yokes of oxen," to which an additional yoke was added the next day. They also had one cow, bought two more cows near Fort Des Moines on June 10, and a fourth cow on June 12. Diary of Henry Egge, Manuscript, Nebr. St. Hist. Soc. Ms. Files.

<sup>3</sup> Some confusion concerning the leadership of the party arose after Stolley's departure. This occurred because the party was soon divided. Surveyor Barnard, in whom Stolley vested the leadership and author-

The dates immediately following are taken from the diary of Heinrich Egge, until I could personally join the group again.<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Egge writes:

On the 23rd of June we passed through Fremont which consisted of ten log houses. June 26 we arrived at Columbus. At that time it was a town of eighteen log houses. We crossed the Loup River on June 27 at Genoa, approximately twenty miles up the river from Columbus, and arrived on July 2 at the mouth of Wood River. Thus it was our pioneer train which made the first wagon track over the wild prairie of the Platte valley west of Columbus. After a day's reconnoitering the surveyor located the place for the settlement--this was on July 4, 1857--fifty years ago today (1907).

Our wagon train was forced to fall back about seven miles on this account, and on July 5 the town site as well as the claims for settlers were staked out as far as possible.<sup>5</sup> The site of the town located at that time was almost the same as that of the present Grand Island except that the greater part of it was directly south and southwest of the location of today, between the present town and the north channel of the Platte River and the Wood River.

Uncertain as to whether the correct choice of a location had been made, the settlers, on July 9, divided into three groups in order to again undertake a careful examination of the whole region. One of these groups explored the area along Prairie Creek; another group turned toward the Platte River and investigated the island--from which our settlement later received its name, Grand Island; the third party went up the Wood River for about thirty miles.

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ity, hurried ahead to select the township and location of the settlement. After this separation the temporary spokesman for the remainder of the party was the interpreter Fred Hedde. Hedde not only spoke English but had a legal training. He thus became the spokesman for the German speaking group that made up the second section of the party.

<sup>4</sup> William Stolley left the group at this time and did not rejoin them until July 5, 1858.

<sup>5</sup> August Schernekau, who came to the settlement in 1858, gives interesting details of how the town site and claims had been laid out by the earlier settlers. August Schernekau, "Her Quota Filled," *Grand Island Independent*.



On July 11 all the exploring parties had returned, and it was agreed that the place already selected and staked for the settlement was the most suitable location. At a meeting of all settlers it was decided that four log houses should now be built, each 14 x 32 feet, the interior to be divided into two parts 14 x 14 feet, each house to have an entry the same width as the door so that a hall four feet wide separated the two rooms.

At the same time breaking the prairies was to begin immediately, as the season was well advanced. (However, only fifty acres were broken the first summer.) On July 12, work began in earnest. Some cut down trees and others hauled them in with oxen. Still others prepared wood to burn charcoal for the blacksmith shop.

On July 23, a wagon team was sent to Omaha to bring back a load of provisions still in storage there.<sup>6</sup> On Saturday, August 15, some of the settlers were able to move into their new homes, and by the 27th of the same month all of the four houses were inhabited.<sup>7</sup> These houses were built on the South Half of the Northwest Quarter and on the North Half of the Southwest Quarter of Section 14, Town 11, Range 9 West, which is now (1907) a part of the farm of Christian Menck, who was one of the early pioneer settlers.

Soon after our settlement was founded, another town was formed about seven miles west of the original four houses. These new settlers were David Croker, Wm. Roberts, M. Potts and Billy (William) Painter. This town was named "Mendotte," but was abandoned after a short time; only David Croker retaining possession of the "abandoned city." But soon, he too left.

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<sup>6</sup> Food shortage threatened the settlement in the very beginning. Hired teamsters who had accompanied the settlers from Omaha with supplies were sent back for more. They failed to come back. Hedde, *op. cit.*

This wagon left the settlement on July 7. Two days later, July 9, it was "decided to limit the food as much as possible because we were afraid we would not have enough to last until the wagon came back from Omaha." On July 23, "One of our wagons left for Omaha as our provisions were getting scarce and we feared the driver from Omaha would not come back." On July 30 it became necessary to butcher an ox. Rations were limited to one pound of meat, a third of a pound of flour a day. The wagon returned with supplies on August 6. Egge Diary.

<sup>7</sup> Two houses were in the town site--one built by Hagge and the other for Hedde. Schernekau, *op. cit.*

After selling his claim to Fred Evans, he went to Santa Clara County, California. Fred Evans sold this place after a few years and moved to Sioux City. He later went to the Black Hills and took possession of Hot Springs, South Dakota, where he erected a fine hotel and established a health resort which is now visited by many. Things changed very rapidly around about us, but the "picked troops" of our settlement remained true to the soil on which they had settled.

## CHAPTER III

### EARLY HARDSHIPS

Hardships; lack of supplies. A hunting expedition and a snow storm. The first death in Hall County. The unfordable Loup River and the consequences thereof.

Quite early in the fall Fred Hedde left our settlement for Davenport, Iowa, to spend the winter there and to prepare himself so that he could return to the settlement in the spring of 1858 with better equipment. He brought a very long list of clothing, wool blankets and other things that the settlers needed very badly. However, in the contract between the settlers and the Town Company it was not provided that the Company should furnish the settlers with clothing or other items; thus it depended entirely upon the good will of the Town Company whether or not they furnished the desired clothing, goods and so forth, or wanted to advance the money for them. A careful estimate of the cost that I made after looking through the list of desired articles showed that a sum of \$500 would be needed to secure them. At first I firmly declined to submit these desires of our settlers to the Town Company because Hedde had been especially delegated by the settlers to do this. I frequently asked Hedde what progress he was making in this matter, and always received the same answer: "I have not been able to get any of the gentlemen to listen to me or even discuss the matter with me. They don't seem to want to have anything to do with me." Thus it continued for over two weeks, until the situation began to make me very uneasy. One evening about nine o'clock Hedde came to my house and said: "I'm through with the whole business. I'm tired of running after these people every day. They will do nothing that they are not obligated to do."

Quickly my mind was made up. It had long been known to me that all of the members of the Town Company entertained

an unconquerable mistrust of Mr. Hedde, and I had many times taken upon myself to defend him. However, our settlers in the wilderness must not be made to suffer on this account, inasmuch as the desired provisions were absolutely necessary and the settlers had obligated themselves in writing to promptly repay this extra debt to the Town Company with the first money they should earn. Under these conditions, I decided to take the matter in hand. Saying to Hedde, "Remain here until I return," I went directly to A. H. Barrows who lay sick in bed at his home. He received me at once and listened to me quietly and in a friendly manner as I explained to him that the people without warm clothing and wool would be unable to endure the winter in the wilderness. When I finished Barrows said: "Stolley, hand me that check book and pen and ink. The people shall not suffer want; the German people are honest people; they will give my money back to me." In a few minutes I had his personal check for \$500.

A half hour later I showed Hedde the \$500 check. The clothing could be bought.

On Monday, September 21, 1857, four wagons were again sent to Omaha, to get provisions that the Town Company had shipped from St. Louis and the clothing and the wool blankets which had been sent from Davenport by way of St. Louis. Due to the low level of the water in the Missouri River these shipments were delayed enroute so that the four wagons had to wait until the supplies arrived in Omaha.

Ignorance (on the part of the Town Company as well as the settlers) regarding the peculiarities of the Missouri as well as the Loup River was almost fatal to our young colony, placing its very existence in question, and that during the first winter. For both these streams had to be forded in those days, whenever it was necessary to cross them. Though a ferry boat had been built at Columbus at this time, it was not very good; generally in such a condition that the crossing was dangerous. Then too, it was driven downstream by floating ice just when most needed to transport provisions and people. Oxen, cattle and horses always had to ford or swim the stream. Unfortunately, this was the situation when the four wagons returned from Omaha to Columbus with the winter supplies. As a result, they were un-



able to cross the Loup and had to lay over at Columbus for a long time, while in our settlement the need for food and clothing grew daily. Four whole weeks this supply transport was delayed in Columbus, and before that, a long time in Omaha, so that the supplies did not reach the settlement until January 25, 1858. After having been anxiously awaited for so long a time they were received with great rejoicing.

As a result of having for months been reduced to half rations and less, many had become weak and ailing. There was a general feeling of relief to have the assurance that for a long time to come no scarcity of food supplies need be feared.

At this point I shall go back two months to relate an incident which occurred in November, 1857.

It was on the sixth of November when Heinrich Joehnck, Lorenz Barnard and two settlers from Mendotte (Wm. Roberts and Billy Painter) went up to Prairie Creek to shoot some antelope and ducks. Near the pond after which Lake Township was named, about six miles north of Grand Island, the hunters separated. L. Barnard and Roberts proceeded upstream and Heinrich Joehnck and Billy Painter downstream.

While shooting ducks and retrieving them from the creek their feet soon became wet. In the afternoon it began to rain, so that the hunters had scarcely a dry stitch of clothing on their bodies when they began the return trip to the settlement toward evening. In addition, the wind turned from south to northwest, and the rain changed to snow. The wind which had been warm thus far, became colder every moment, and the snowfall became heavier and heavier. The already strong wind became a fury and the heavy snow masses whirled over the plains. There was no shelter whatever for the thoroughly soaked hunters. The wet garments froze on their bodies, and it was a good thing that they had to go with and not against, the wind in order to reach the settlement.

Barnard and Roberts succeeded in reaching the settlement, but Heinrich Joehnck and Billy Painter were not so fortunate. By nightfall they were completely lost. After considering what had best be done, they decided to spend the night where they were. They tried to find some protection in a shallow ravine by sticking their shotguns in the ground and covering them with long

grass. But the raging storm defeated all their efforts in this direction; the wind continually scattering the heaps of grass that they had collected with such difficulty. Whirled into the icy air the grass mingled with the driving fine snow and sailed away across the prairie.

Both of the unfortunate men knew very well that their salvation, "even if possible at all," lay in keeping in constant motion; and in order not to go farther astray from the settlement, they must walk around and around in the place where they were. This they did in their drenched and now stiffly frozen clothing, all through that long and terrible November night, during which the steadily weakening Billy Painter gradually devoured half of a raw duck. When day finally dawned, snow lay about eighteen inches deep and still more snow continued to beat down. Remaining there now meant certain death, and so in the morning, staggering more than walking, they again attempted to reach the settlement.

At the settlement that same morning an attempt had immediately been made to find the lost ones, but the search had to be given up as impossible because the terrible blizzard continued unabated. Finally, about nine o'clock in the forenoon, when the storm died down a little, Heinrich Joehnck came home alone; but in what a condition! He was almost unable to move or to speak. With difficulty they ascertained from him that his unfortunate companion had fallen exhausted on the snow covered prairie, and could not be far away.

A party set out immediately and after long search found the unfortunate victim. He was brought to the settlement as quickly as possible and everything possible was done to save him, but without success—death soon claimed its victim, Billy Painter's was the first death of a white person in Hall County.

November of that year brought unusually great discomfort and hardship to the settlers in the four little houses because the supplies at the Columbus Crossing could not be brought over on account of the ice floes.

On November 10, a wagon loaded with hay was sent out from the settlement to bring back provisions for the hungry people, if possible, from the provision train at Columbus (65 miles distant). When this team was observed on November 13,



The eight original Hall County pioneers who were present for the Fifty Year Celebration in 1907. They are, top row: William Stolley, Mrs. John Thomssen, Sr., Fred Hedde. Bottom row: Henry Joehnck, Sr., Mrs. Henry Joehnck, Sr., Christian H. Menck, William A. Hagge and Cay Ewoldt.





by our settlers who were in Columbus, two men crossed the Loup by means of a small boat in spite of the menacing, drifting lumps of ice. A conference was held and it was decided to buy a lot of rigging in Columbus with which to work the ferry boat.<sup>1</sup> After three days of useless effort, this experiment had to be given up as impractical. Instead, by means of a small boat, little by little, 2000 pounds of flour and some other badly needed goods were brought successfully over the cursed river. These supplies were loaded on the wagon waiting on the west bank and immediately proceeded homeward to the settlement. They arrived at the settlement on the 18th of November to the great joy of the hungry people. The same wagon however, brought along two who became ill of fever as a result of the hardships endured in Columbus.<sup>2</sup>

Again on November 23, a wagon loaded with hay was sent to Columbus but it returned on December 4 without bringing home provisions of any sort. It was quite "impossible" to cross the Loup River.

About this time Pawnee Indians appeared for the first time in our settlement. They were friendly and left again very shortly.

There was neither candles nor soap in our settlement during the winter of 1857 and 1858. Everybody went to bed early and stayed in bed until daylight. For washing purposes home-made lye was used.

Bitter necessity compelled us to butcher several work oxen. As a result of the exceedingly mild weather the Loup River did not freeze over this winter, but, on January 25, as has been noted, the first "starving time" came to an end. However, after only five months a shortage again prevailed so that by June 5, 1858 only half rations could be given out. At the same time the sowing meant work requiring great exertion from early in the morning until late at night. Fortunately, however, sufficient provisions arrived on June 24 from Omaha, and since that time only the memories of these times live on in the minds of the few—who are still among the living—who endured and experienced them.

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<sup>1</sup> Egge says they bought all the rope in Columbus to make the rigging. He was in the party of four Germans and two Americans who accompanied the wagon that arrived at the Loup on the thirteenth. Egge Diary.

<sup>2</sup> The wagon left Columbus on November 18, and arrived at the settlement November 21. Thede and Stier were the two who were ill. Egge Diary.

## CHAPTER IV

### GROWTH OF THE SETTLEMENT

Arrival of new settlers. Arson and devastating fires. Colonel May proves himself to be a friend of the settlers. Fort Kearny, the market place. The Town Company is dissolved and the Americans leave our settlement.

On July 5, 1858, there arrived under my leadership a new train of settlers from Davenport, consisting of twenty persons, ten wagons, twenty yoke of work oxen and a number of milk cows and young stock, and thereupon the condition of the settlement improved considerably. What is more, the new arrivals had a much less pleasant trip through the State of Iowa, than we had in the preceding year, and they came into our settlement under less favorable conditions than those who came in 1857.

At the end of April this wagon train left Davenport, Iowa, and since I was tied up--obliged to look after business and official affairs--it was impossible for me to accompany the train from the start. Not until three weeks from the time the train left Davenport was it possible for me to follow. We had an exceedingly wet and cold spring and early summer in the year of 1858 and, because of this, the roads and trails were nearly impassable and almost bottomless. All our wagons were heavily loaded, so we advanced very slowly. I had made Fred Hedde leader of this caravan until I could join them. But within a week after the departure from Davenport there came letters of bitter complaint regarding the manner in which Fred Hedde was leading the train. These complaints became numerous and after the train had been on the road fourteen days I was informed that it had completely broken up and scattered, branching off in all directions.

Three weeks after the departure from Davenport, I was finally able to break away and I traveled by railroad (Chicago and

Rock Island) to Iowa City, to which city this railroad was in operation. In Iowa City I took the Overland stage to Des Moines. A scant two miles west of Iowa City I met Fred Hedde with a Town Company wagon which had been loaded (at the start), largely with his own goods. He had, as I discovered, found it advantageous to transfer his goods into my wagon and to load my belongings into the Town Company's wagon. I could speak only hurriedly with Hedde because the stage driver was not permitted to stop, so I ordered him to take my goods back to Iowa City, and ship them back to Davenport by rail. However, I hurried on and soon met several people belonging to our train on the road--while others were nowhere to be seen. In Des Moines I secured a team from the livery stable and drove eastward on the main road until I found all of our wagons, directing the various fragments to a certain point on Coon River. Then I drove back to Des Moines, returning my hired rig, and again took the stage coach in order to reach the wagon train. It did not take very long until all of the various members of our wagon train were gathered at the appointed meeting place. We camped at this place on Coon River for some time, drying our clothes and making some needed repairs. Fred Hedde arrived at our camp on foot about eight days later.

Through Iowa until we reached Omaha we had "bottomless" roads and it was a difficult trip until we reached the Platte Valley--then it became better. In spite of all difficulties, the journey was completed in peace and harmony, after I had succeeded in collecting the scattered train. We arrived at the settlement on July 5.

Inasmuch as the new settlers who joined us in the summer of 1858 in Grand Island had not received the same advantages as those of 1857 such as provisions for one year and weapons and clothing, while, on the other hand they had a much more difficult journey coming out, I placed them on the same basis as the original ones. So far as it is still possible for me, I will give their names here:

Heinrich Vieregg

John Vieregg

Johann Hann with wife and two children

Carl Bohl and wife

Adolph Hopfner

Rudolph Mattiesen  
August Schernikau  
Charles Gardener.

On August 27, 1858, some 1500 Pawnee Indians passed through our settlement and stole considerable green corn and potatoes, but otherwise showing no animosity.<sup>1</sup>

On January 8, 1859, occurred the first fire in the settlement when the house inhabited by Heinrich Schoel and Wm. Stier burned down. Practically none of their goods were saved, but the other settlers assisted them according to their means.

Only a few days later, on January 18, a fire occurred in which the young settlement was almost wiped out, when eight houses became the prey of the unchained element--fire. Three men living in Florence (near Omaha) had arrived here that day on their return from the recently discovered gold fields in Colorado and were camping on the bank of Platte or Wood River. One of these men kindled the dry prairie grass and declared, "I will burn the whole God damned German settlement!"<sup>2</sup>

This terrible disaster, which struck our settlement in the midst of winter, resulted in great suffering and hardship because the much needed provisions and clothing were for the most part destroyed. The few remaining dwellings barely escaped the same fate.

Unfortunately, the instigator of this crime escaped. This damnable rogue escaped the punishment of hanging because of the general confusion among the poor settlers, whose every ounce of strength was needed to save whatever possible. Those hardest hit were Wm. A. Hagge, Christian Menck, Marx Stelk, Fred Vatje, Hans Wrage, Mathias Gries and myself, as well as the two brothers John and Heinrich Vieregg, and Rudolph Matthiesen. The last three named persons belonged to the new addition to the settlers who came in July, 1858.

Blame for carelessness and neglect can be spared almost none of those concerned, since I had pointed out to the Davenport

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<sup>1</sup> The Indians passed through on August 26, according to Egge. Egge Diary.

<sup>2</sup> The incendiary's name was Tottel or Tailles. He gave as his reason that "the damned Dutch had no right to establish a settlement." Menck, *op. cit.*



settlers the imperative need of protecting themselves against fire, but lack of experience on the part of the new settlers with prairie fires, so common in those days, made the warning ineffective and they had not protected themselves against the unforeseen danger. The fact that the first inhabitants of our settlement were mostly people who had recently come from Germany and were therefore inexperienced in every respect might be offered as an excuse for them. Unfortunately, circumstances and business reasons still made it imperative for me to return to Davenport, Iowa, from time to time, otherwise this tragedy would never have happened, for I had had years of experience as a hunter and traveler in the western and southern states and had already had experience in this respect. However, the repeated warnings had not been heeded, and the result was then naturally "ruin." The good citizens of Omaha took up a collection for the sufferers, but the individual who was to deliver the money left for parts unknown, and was never heard from again.

Truly! These were hard times for the pioneers of Hall County, and it required men of iron will not to leave the young settlement entirely discouraged.

In the fall of 1859 I succeeded on behalf of our settlement in making a contract with Colonel May,<sup>3</sup> commander at Fort Kearny, for the delivery of 2000 bushels of corn at \$2 a bushel. Colonel May was a very honest man, and proved to be a real friend of the settlers. Up to this time the necessary corn for Fort Kearny had been secured from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, at a cost of \$3.50 to \$4 a bushel, and Colonel May had many obstacles to overcome before he could finally persuade the War Department at Washington to give this delivery contract to us, in spite of the fact that we offered to deliver the corn at about half the price offered by previous contractors. Corrupt groups existed even at that time, who enriched themselves through dishonest practices, often to the detriment of our settlers.

Many of our inhabitants found very remunerative employment at Fort Kearny at such times as work at home permitted.

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<sup>3</sup> Charles A. May, in command July-November, 1858; July, 1859-August, 1860. *Nebr. St. Hist. Soc. Publications*, XXI, 321.

Besides this, the trade with the emigrants, traveling to the then newly discovered gold mines in Colorado, as well as those bound for California, New Mexico, Montana, and Oregon, was very profitable for us. For many years we had an excellent market for all our products, at home as well as at Fort Kearny. A good head of cabbage, for example, sold for fifty cents, a nice watermelon brought one dollar. There were no bank notes at that time, only gold and silver money being used.

Almost daily, long wagon trains passed our homes going either up or down the Platte River and settlers could often buy at a very low price lame cattle and young calves, which, with rest and feed were in tip-top shape again in a very short time. Under these conditions our settlement developed very rapidly and, in time, became one of the best in the State of Nebraska.

While the circumstances and prospects of those who came here to establish their homes and who devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the tilling of the soil improved steadily, the opposite was true for those who had participated in the settlement purely as a speculation.

It soon became evident that the transfer of the National Capital from Washington to Grand Island City would be delayed for some time, even though, as originally laid out, it contained an area of 1440 acres.

Here I wish to insert the story of how our new town received the name of "Grand Island City" later assumed by the present city. It was at one of our meetings held in the bank of Chubb Brothers and Barrows during the winter of 1857-1858 to discuss various matters relative to the settlement. Barrows, Gurley and Woodward, as well as Hedde and myself were present. At this meeting the problem of a name for our newly founded city was settled. Three names were proposed, as follows:

A. H. Barrows suggested "New Philadelphia."

Fred Hedde proposed "New Kiel."

I recommended the name "Grand Island," which was finally adopted.

The Town Company had expended the sum of \$6000 for provisions and equipment, and A. H. Barrows had personally advanced another \$500 for the purchase of necessary clothing and bedding for the settlers, when the banking house of Chubb

Brothers and Barrows in Washington City (D. C.) crashed. As a result, the branch bank of the same name in Davenport, Iowa, was forced to close its doors. Between the Town Company and a part of the settlers there arose differences. W. H. Gurley, died very soon. A. H. Barrows having lost everything, moved from Davenport, Iowa, to Philadelphia, and of the Town Company members known to us, only B. B. Woodward remained. He was well able and willing to carry out the obligations of the Town Company for the settlers, so far as this was possible.

Since the Territorial Law authorizing each settler to take up 320 acres of land was declared unconstitutional, not all the settlers were able to claim 320 acres each, and it would have been no more than fair, if an agreement could have been made which would have been just to both sides, to the settlers as well as to the Town Company, to have redrawn a reasonable agreement to correspond. Since we had settled on unsurveyed land and were therefore squatters, the Town Company could not bring suit to settle this dispute with the settlers, and what is more the company had never been inclined to use coercive measures.

Fred Hedde, who had been elected probate judge in an election held in the fall of 1859 (an election that shortly proved to be illegal) induced several of the settlers to file attachments against the property of the Town Company. In the proceedings, Fred Hedde was not only attorney for the plaintiffs but was, as a matter of course, judge, also. Thus, for example, Friedrich Vatje obtained an attachment through and from Fred Hedde, and the company's forge and forge tools were put up for sale and bought by Fredrich Vatje, though the Town Company did not owe Vatje a red cent. On the other hand, Fred Vatje owed the Town Company not only his full share for provisions but also a considerable sum to A. H. Barrows for clothing delivered.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> It is possible that the settlers had a basis for claims against the company, because of the company's failure to carry out the fourth section of the contract-advance provisions for one year. The financial difficulties of the promoters as a result of the Panic of 1857 makes this seem very probable. See footnote 4, Chapter I.

Orders of attachment against B. B. Woodward were issued Febr. 16, 1861 in favor of H. Joenck, G. Schulz, C. Menck, T. Nagel and M. Stelk by Probate Judge Fred Hedde of Hall County. *Huntsman's Echo*, Apr. 25, 1861.

Such was the legal state of affairs in our settlement for quite a while, which obviously resulted in bad feelings and dissatisfaction. Very soon after this A. H. Barrows died of rheumatism in the poor house in Philadelphia, and the \$500 which he so generously and gladly gave to clothe our needy settlers would have been of the greatest use to him. Only three of the settlers came to me of their own free will and paid their bills of clothing and materials in full, which I immediately forwarded to Barrows. But that is all that Barrows received of his \$500. The names of those three settlers should be mentioned; they were Heinrich Egge, Hans Wrage and Christian Andresen.

A few years later B. B. Woodward also died, and therewith ended this dismal chapter. Gladly would I have omitted these dark pages from my history of our settlement, but the truth would then have been only half told.

Later many of these pioneer settlers, some having passed away, and some still among the living, have told me that they would like to pay these debts of honor;<sup>5</sup> but it is now too late; for those to whom it was due are long ago in their graves--no longer needful of money.

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<sup>5</sup> The author explains the failure by other members of the settlement, to repay A. H. Barrows, as due to unworthy advice to which they listened.



## CHAPTER V

### MORMONS AND HUNTING EXPERIENCES

Mormon settlement on the Wood River.  
The first newspaper in Hall County. Organization of Hall County and the first hunting expedition into the region of the South Loup River.

As early as the spring of 1858, a considerable number of Mormons (coming from Genoa on the Loup) settled on the Wood River. These people carried on farming and cattle raising.

A Mormon named Joseph E. Johnson published a weekly paper under the title *The Huntsman's Echo*, later changing it to *The Banner*. However, as early as the spring of 1863 these people all moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, after selling their claims to newcomers. The newspaperman also moved on with the people of his faith, and in Salt Lake again published his newspaper under the new name, *Mountain Bugle*.

The German settlement which came under the jurisdiction of Platte County in the beginning, developed very rapidly, and as early as the year 1859 the present Hall County (at least by that name) was organized<sup>1</sup> and the following officers were elected:

Fred Hedde, probate judge  
Theodore Nagel, county clerk  
Henry Egge, Hans Wrage, James Vieregg, county commissioners  
R. C. Barnard, Wm. Stolley, justices of the peace

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<sup>1</sup> This county organization was declared illegal in the Omaha courts when a justice court case was appealed. Stolley "Dreams of Future National Capital," *Grand Island Independent*, June 29, 1907.

There is no record (in the *American Digest*) of an appeal decided by the courts, though it may not have been a recorded case. Then, too, there is a possibility that the court refused to hear the appeal on the grounds that no legal county organization existed.-Ed.

Herman Vasold, sheriff  
 Christian Andresen, county treasurer  
 Fred Doll, assessor  
 Christian Menck, Mathias Gries, constables

The first postoffice was established in the spring of 1859 and R. C. Barnard, our company's surveyor, was our first postmaster. The first weekly postal delivery from Omaha to Fort Kearny was established in October, 1858. In 1860, this service was increased to three times a week, and in 1864 it became daily.

In the month of October, 1859, I went on a hunting trip accompanied by Christian Andresen and two other men, who were staying with us on their return trip from Colorado to Davenport. The Davenport friends were Peter Kuhl and Chas. Klenze. We had one ox team and one mule team, as well as an

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Early Hall county officials as obtained from various sources:

	Appointed <sup>2</sup> Dec. 9, 1858	Elected Oct. 11, 1859	Elected <sup>1</sup> Oct. 11, 1859
Probate Judge	Richard C. Barnard	Frederick Hedde	Frederick Hedde
Sheriff	Herman Vasold	Hans Wrage	Herman Vasold
Treasurer	Joshua Smith	Christian Andresen	Christian Andresen
Commissioners	Frederick Hedde Daniel B. Croker Hans Vieregge	Jasper J. Eldridge Jochim Vieregge Henry Egge	Hans Wrage James Vieregge Henry Egge
Constables	George Shultz Christian Menck		Mathias Gries Christian Menck
Justices of the Peace	Isaac Thomas William A. Hagge		R. C. Barnard William Stolley
Recorder	Theodore F. Nagel		
County Clerk		William A. Hagge	Theodore F. Nagel
Register of Deeds		Theodore F. Nagel	
Surveyor		Richard C. Barnard	
Member of Legislature		Richard C. Barnard	
Assessor			Fred Doll

<sup>2</sup> These appointments were made by Acting Governor J. Sterling Morton in accordance with an act approved November 4, 1858. *Official Records, Territory of Nebraska* 1854-61, 219. The election of October 11, 1859 is reported in the same, p. 249.

extra horse named "Cabbage," and after selling our load of products in Fort Kearny we went hunting, going for the first time into a territory which up to that time had not been visited by our settlers. We followed the course of Wood River upstream from Fort Kearny for about twelve miles where we camped for the night, planning to cross the Wood River to the South Loup River on the following day. During the day we noticed huge clouds of smoke, which led us to believe that undoubtedly the prairie was on fire near the Loup River, and since at that time no one had thought of locating there, on the Loup, it was self-evident to us that the Indians had set the prairies on fire. Inasmuch as we were at peace with all the Indian tribes, it did not greatly alarm us. In the meantime the wind turned from southwest to northeast, increasing finally to a gale, and very shortly we noticed that the fire was roaring directly toward us. In spite of the fact that we were on the right bank of the Wood River while the prairie fire was on the left side, we were nevertheless in greatest danger, because the width of Wood River was not great enough to prevent the fire from leaping across. The only thing left for us to do was to start a backfire as soon as our teams reached a fairly grass-free place near the Wood River. We then set fire to the prairie some distance away from us so that this fire burned against the wind and could be controlled easily. After the surrounding area was burned bare of everything inflammable we easily put out the small fires which surrounded our wagons in a half circle. None too soon had we carried out these protective measures, for the sea of fire approached with furious speed, rolling before it black clouds of smoke that almost suffocated us. We lay down on the ground where the air was freest of smoke. One who has not seen a gale-whipped prairie fire can hardly imagine the awful terror of it; the fire monster rages across the wide grass-covered plain in the form of a wedge, hiding everything in black clouds of smoke, and developing such intense heat that the dry grass is ignited more than 200 feet in advance of the actual fire line. As swiftly as it comes--just as suddenly it is over for those who know how to protect themselves against it. On the great plains such a fire cuts a wide swath through the dry grass in a few hours and then the land lies black, as far as the eye can see

until the following spring, when new green grass springs up to cover it again. This fire burned as far as the Platte River and 400 tons of hay belonging to the government were destroyed by flames.<sup>3</sup>

After the sun had disappeared on the western horizon, we saw at some considerable distance a dark object approaching from the direction of the Loup, and it was natural for us to assume that this was one or more buffalo; three of us took our rifles, leaving Christian Andresen in camp, and took our stand on the side of the hill over which a well-marked buffalo trail led to the Wood River. In the meantime twilight had already set in. We placed ourselves in shooting position on one knee and, with cocked guns watched for the appearance of the hoped-for game. We did not have to wait long, and, as the dark forms came within range, outlined against the sky, we involuntarily raised our rifles--then I distinctly saw pointed horses' ears, instead of the expected buffalo heads, outlined against the evening sky, and I hastily called to my companions: "For God's sake, don't shoot!" I jumped up and shouted as loudly as I could: "Halt! Who is there?" The answer came promptly: "Good friends, men in distress." It then appeared that they were two trappers who had come from Des Moines, Iowa, to spend the winter on the Loup River trapping beaver and otter and hunting other fur bearing animals. They had carelessly and thoughtlessly neglected their campfire, and while they were out attending their traps, the wind fanned their fire into a flame which set the prairie on fire. This was the origin of the Loup River prairie fire, that caused us so much trouble and consumed 400 tons of government hay.

Almost all the equipment belonging to these trappers was destroyed. They had salvaged only the rear end of their wagon, to which they had hitched their team of horses in order to transport the few remaining articles not destroyed by the fire. We furnished these men with sufficient food to reach our settlement. I also bought the partially melted lead, and a few other things that they no longer needed, such as traps and so on. On the fol-

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<sup>3</sup> Hay was stacked on the north bank of the Platte opposite Fort Kearny. Stolley, "Dream of Future National Capital," *Grand Island Independent*, June 29, 1907.



lowing morning we continued our journey to the Loup River, but darkness overtook us before we reached the river and we were compelled to spend the night on the desolate prairie.

Since we found no water all day, we ourselves, as well as our mules and oxen, were very thirsty, and a swampy bottomland such as are not infrequently found on the prairie into which we had accidentally wandered in the darkness, caused us to halt for the night. The oxen and mules tried to drink out of the small holes in which water had collected. We dipped water out with our hands and we could hear the mules and oxen drinking noisily.

We lay down and were soon sound asleep after the strenuous day's trip, though we had nothing to eat or drink. At daybreak we were up again and we found that these small holes in the bottomland, from which we had drunk, were deep tracks of roaming buffalo in which swamp water had collected. Christian Andresen climbed the nearest hill to look about. From the top he waved his hat jubilantly and pointed with his arm. We then discovered that we were near the Loup River and that we must have driven almost parallel with the river and thus failed to reach our destination the day before.

An hour later we made camp at the mouth of a small creek emptying into the Loup River under a large, lone cottonwood tree. By going astray, we had gone upstream above the burned region and come to prairie untouched by the fire where we found an ideal camping place.

As we came down the Loup Valley we saw a large dark-colored animal moving about on the other side of the river and Peter Kuhl was firmly convinced that it was a buffalo. I was of a different opinion, but could not say definitely what kind of animal it might be. We were busily engaged preparing an excellent meal and the coffee was already done when we experienced a surprise. At a fast gallop, with beautiful flying mane and tail, appeared a fine brown Indian pony, a stallion. The animal was on the other side of the river (South Loup), and coming to a stop just opposite our camp he whinnied and seemed inclined to come over to us. Peter Kuhl became so excited that he put a bridle on one of his mules, jumped on his back and, willy-nilly, tried to cross the Loup. But Peter fared very badly, for when he

was about three steps from the bank his mule sank in quicksand up to his belly and Peter, "*der Esel*" that sat on him, had difficulty in reaching dry land himself. After all of us had worked strenuously, getting soaked in the process, we finally succeeded in saving the mule's life. Only then were we able to eat our partially burned meal, but the coffee was good. While we were still eating our visitor galloped away returning from whence he had come. Sad looks, particularly Andresen's, followed the beautiful animal until he disappeared among the hills on the other side of the river. Almost immediately, however, in the vicinity where our caller (the pony) had disappeared, there appeared another dark object, and this time it actually was a live buffalo.

It was still early in the day. Quickly all preparations were made and Kuhl, Klenze and I advanced upon the welcome game intent on making it our own. We soon found a place near our camp where we could cross the river with the team without trouble, but we naturally crossed on foot. In the meantime the buffalo again disappeared among the hills, where, as we later discovered, he followed a ravine.

We soon left the mile and a half wide valley behind us and proceeded cautiously along the ravine into which the buffalo had gone. We advanced only about 200 steps before the beautiful animal came within range of our rifles. The salvo crashed and this buffalo became our first prize.

The animal was immediately skinned and disemboweled. We could not cut it up very well because we did not have an axe with us. We hurried back to the camp. The ox team was hitched up to the wagon and Andresen drove them, while Kuhl and myself rode the mules. Klenze remained in camp. Everything went like clockwork, and when we arrived near our buffalo we found all sorts of visitors already there. Two white-headed eagles were sitting peacefully on our buffalo and having a good meal. A number of buzzards (*Carthartes aura*) sat around singly or in groups, waiting for the eagles to finish their meal. From all directions, prairie as well as large gray wolves appeared. The whole hill seemed to be alive.

Very soon we had our prize carved up and loaded on our wagon and were headed back to camp. When we were within a

half mile from the ford across the Loup our Indian pony again appeared snorting and neighing, and went along between the wagon and those of us who rode the mules. The animal did not appear at all wild. Kuhl and I held our mules back a little, and Andresen drove quietly on with his ox team. Without stopping we drove into the stream, our stallion, herded on both sides by Kuhl and me, following the wagon without resistance, and our little caravan made a smooth crossing of the river to the delight of us all. Andresen got some ears of corn which he cautiously threw to the splendid animal. But the horse, after smelling the choice fodder, ignored it completely and began sporting with one of the mules and "Mrs. Cabbage."<sup>4</sup> I had brought the bloody lung of the buffalo along in order to poison the wolves during the following night. The first evening and the first night that we spent in this camp remain for me one of the most beautiful hunting memories of my life--and I have experienced quite a few.

Next we fried buffalo steaks, onions and other vegetables seasoned with pepper and salt. As Kuhl expressed it, we had "plenty and to spare." Then the large iron kettle was placed on the fire in order to prepare a nourishing soup. All these preparations were managed by Andresen, Kuhl and Klenze, while my hands were full getting my poison project ready for the night. A dozen pieces of buffalo meat, one cubic inch in size, were fastened on to the same number of sticks which were about fifteen inches long and pointed at both ends. The point of the stick was driven through the meat so that about a fourth of an inch extended beyond the meat. A little ball of lard was then pressed on this point so that the meat would not fall off the stick. This done, I cut a small hole in the lard with my knife, and put a heaping knife-point full of powdered crystalized strychnine into the opening which was then smoothed over with lard, so as to convey the poison to the animal in concentrated form.

The buffalo's bloody lung served me to excellent purpose. I fastened the wind pipe to a piece of rope of suitable length and started out. At a certain point I began dragging the bloody buffalo lung along behind me, after placing one of the stakes with

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<sup>4</sup> The extra horse that they had brought along--an old mare.



the poisoned bait at the starting point. Every 200 steps I drove in another stake until all of my twelve stakes were in the ground. Then I completed the circle which I had made by dragging the lung to the place where the first stake was driven. The twelve sticks with the poisoned bait were equally spaced over a distance of 2400 steps and I was excited about the result of my experiment. Meantime it became dark, and when I returned to camp, I found everything in nice order and most comfortable. Kuhl and Klenze had hung the best of the meat—the rump, hind quarters, and the best parts of the back—on the cottonwood tree; Andresen, meanwhile, had fried and cooked, until the aroma was delightful to me—even while still a ways from the camp. A large fire brightened the whole camp, and so we sat down to enjoy a meal and satisfied our excellent appetite. After we finished eating the dishes were hurriedly washed, buffalo hides were spread out near the campfire, and with fur coats thrown over our shoulders and pipes going, we lay around our campfire. Our conversation was animated, naturally. From the direction of the place where we had shot the buffalo we could hear the howling of a large number of wolves, and it was not long until the howl of a great many gray wolves was heard from the opposite side of our camping place as they rapidly approached our camp. The night was pitch dark and the air was still; the smell of the buffalo meat in our camp was attracting the wolves from the whole countryside after they had devoured the remains where the buffalo had been killed. It was horrible, beautiful music, at least to me; and even the others seemed to be affected by it, but the mules and the oxen gave unmistakable signs that they were filled with unrest and fear. However, all of our animals were securely tied. Closer and closer came the melancholy howling of the big gray wolves as they approached the places where I had staked the poisoned bait, and I was all attention as the pack came nearer and nearer. Suddenly it became deathly still—the pack had evidently found the scent and the bloody trail I had made. Then something about like this must have happened: the pack being fairly large, it separated into two groups. One bunch followed the trail (scent) in one direction and the other pack took the opposite direction. As soon as the leading wolf found the bait, he swallowed the morsel, and





The Hann house constructed in 1858. A log structure with original grass roof occupied for several months by the Hann family.



sniffed around for a moment for more, while the rest of the pack raced on. At the next stake the same performance was repeated, and so on, until the last stake was reached and every piece of bait swallowed. I knew the exact spot, nearest our camp, where we had last heard the "concert" and early the next morning I was at this place, which I assumed to be the point where the pack had found the scent. The first dead wolves lay about three or four hundred steps apart and close to the trail. Then the distances became less; and about half way down the course, four dead wolves lay within a distance of 300 steps. Altogether, eleven big gray wolves covered the "slaughter," or, rather, the poison field. So I had the job of securing the skins besides other things to do when I returned to camp. Upon my return Andresen's disgruntled face, and Kuhl's merry, mocking laughter which was out of harmony with Andresen's face showed that something must be radically wrong. In answer to my question, "What is the matter, Andresen?" I received the more than peevish retort, "You! The pony is gone again." I could not hold in, but had to break out laughing too. While we ate our breakfast we discussed what to do, and to please Andresen, it was decided that he and Klenze should follow the Loup down stream to look for the pony, while Kuhl and I should go to the hills on this side of the Loup and search for the much-sought-after pony. Therefore, my wolves would have to wait a while--they were in such a condition, you know, that they could very easily do that.

We, that is, Kuhl and I had hardly gone a mile when we saw a large dark object at the foot of the hill. "There he is," says Kuhl. "Who?" I inquired. "The pony," said Kuhl. "Man," I retorted, "Can't you tell a cow from a horse yet? Horns--that's a buffalo! He goes along so quietly that he won't run away, so let's go back and then you and Klenze can shoot him later." I was thinking of my wolves--\$2.50 to \$3 a hide. So we went back. Once more in camp, Andresen and Klenze soon joined us with smiling faces, especially Andresen. Klenze did not become so easily excited about such little things. "Well?" I said to Andresen. "The pony is at his old stand on the other side of the river." "Then leave him there until we are ready to get him," I said. But I couldn't pull the hides over the ears of my

wolves, as I was in a minority of one against three, and they all insisted that I too should join the party to kill the buffalo whose stamping ground Kuhl and I had located. And so it was finally decided. On our way however, we saw two splendid elk, lying on a hill, which we were unsuccessful in getting. After this we proceeded to look up our buffalo, and had little difficulty finding him. The buffalo was resting in a gully about fifteen feet deep, and we could walk directly up to him. At my command—one, two, three, fire—the poor animal was murdered at a distance of fifteen feet. Kuhl and Klenze both shot right over him, and I alone was the guilty murderer. The animal was so thin that we decided not to take his body along. There he remained, food for the wolves, eagles and vultures.

And now back to my wolves and our Indian pony stallion. Meanwhile, the noon hour had arrived, and Andresen had already prepared a fine meal and in addition to buffalo steak, we had fried crackers and strong black coffee. In the afternoon we were to go after our pony stallion. All morning Andresen had been eyeing him hopefully across the Loup. But what was to become of my wolf hides? Nothing doing. The stallion claimed the right of way.

This time we set out with our whole army, namely: Andresen with the ox team as advance column; Klenze on "Cabbage," and Kuhl and I riding mules. So we went, heavily armed as we were--lacking nothing--only Andresen had that all in one--an ox whip. The expedition proceeded very nicely. We had not gone very far on the other side of the South Loup when our Indian pony, "proud as a peacock," with flying mane and tail raised high, came galloping up to us. At once the column was reversed. With Andresen and the ox team leading, our stallion (already knowing our procedure) willingly resuming his place behind the ox team, and our cavalry, with "Cabbage," the "musical," carrying Klenze in the center between the mules we were riding, our column moved in slow tempo to our camping place.

Everything proceeded as we desired--we crossed the river without mishap and our stallion was once more in our midst. But we had made dark plans to rob this beautiful horse of the American steppes of his freedom. Peter Kuhl, a fairly good lasso-thrower, soon had his malicious noose dangling in his



hands, while Andresen, Klenze and myself had cast the end of the rope once around the cottonwood tree in order to be able to pull the rope tight at the proper moment. It was then only necessary to get the prisoner in the right position. This was not at all difficult, for our stallion was sporting with the musical "Cabbage," so we simply led "Cabbage" wherever we wished the pony to come. Soon the freedom of this pretty little animal was ended. Kuhl skillfully threw the noose over the head of the stallion, and the next moment he lay strangled on the ground. "Cabbage" left the scene with notes of alarm, and we were all busily engaged in giving the beloved prisoner enough air to keep him alive. The animal soon became tame and leadable and Andresen rode him for many years. Andresen of his own accord offered to pay each of us, that is Kuhl, Klenze and myself, \$20, which made the animal's value \$80. Now I could skin my wolves in peace and also poison some more, for Christian Andresen was happy in the possession of a truly fine horse, and the rest of us were well satisfied with our share of booty. Our camping place was glorious; the creek at the mouth of which we were camping was, in a manner of speaking, alive with beavers, and we often heard the whistling of the otter though we caught neither beaver nor otter. But I made a good profit on large gray wolf hides.

Finally, when no buffalo and elk appeared, we decided to start the homeward journey, in spite of the fact that we had killed only one good buffalo and so, at ten o'clock one morning, we were homeward bound.

But we had not gone very far when a buffalo herd of about fifteen head came into view. Andresen and Klenze stayed by the wagons and Kuhl and I hunted buffalo. Soon we had brought down three of them and it was evening before we had loaded the meat of the animals on our wagons.

Kuhl and I had to do most of the work, and hard work it was too. Having shot the buffalo on the upland, we were unable to wash the animal blood off us, and we lacked drinking water. After darkness set in, Kuhl and I lay in the wagon and chewed white cabbage leaves to allay our thirst, but finally became so ill that we had to throw up--he to the right and I to the left of the wagon. At two o'clock that night we arrived

at the Wood River, where we fried ourselves some meat and made some good coffee, which soon made us feel like new beings again.

From here we still had two days of forced marching to reach our settlement, so we made only short stops to feed the cattle and horses, and continued on without delay at the earliest possible hour in the morning. Meanwhile sharp cold weather had set in, so that this day's journey was one of the most strenuous marches that I've ever made, chiefly because we had experienced a very tiring excursion on the preceding night and had had very little sleep.

Was it any wonder that we were so dead tired that when we arrived, after dark, at the place where the town of Wood River now stands, we preferred to beg for a night's shelter with one of the Mormon settlers, instead of putting up our own camp and preparing our own supper. The man at whose place we obtained shelter was Henry Peck; he had erected his residence under the ground. Mr. Peck was a man of slight stature, thin, and at the same time very energetic and quick, in a word, an enterprising and very active man. He was the first settler in Hall County who tried to tripple his fortune through trading--in the first transaction, if possible--and for this reason he had provided himself with a quantity of goods from Omaha that were of the cheapest sort, and for the time being also kept in his cave.

The roof of this cave consisted of rafters of newly hewn cottonwoods, which in turn were covered with willow bushes and perhaps slough grass, too, and this finally covered with dirt. Such dwellings were often built at that time, especially among the Mormons on Wood River. They were naturally very warm in winter, but the air was almost suffocating as all ventilation was shut off.

Our Mormon, still a comparatively young man, to date had but one wife--but he already had twelve children, presented to him in rapid succssion by the benevolent Mormon God and his very prolific wife. I believe there must have been several sets of twins. All the young Pecks looked so very much alike that the father himself became confused, mistaking Dick for Jack, and again Jack for Bob, and Bob for Bill, and so on.

In spite of all this, Henry Peck had the glowing hope of making many more women happy by marriage to himself. His

favorite theme was to quote passages from the Bible to us non-Mormons to prove that the holy institution of polygamy was divinely ordained, in order to convert us to his faith. His arguments were so striking, and so logically and correctly presented, that everyone who heard him had to admit that if the Bible were right and actually was a holy book, then Henry Peck was also right. We were received with the greatest politeness and hospitality in this miniature subterranean Mormon kingdom.

After this pioneer merchant of Hall County had shown us --his prospective customers--his ample stock of wares, consisting of knitting yarn, needles and pins, cotton remnants, several boxes of raisins, etc., and had offered and then recommended them to us as dirt cheap, the evening meal was ready and we were invited to take our places at the table, which invitation we in turn gladly accepted. We naturally wanted to "pitch right in" --being really very hungry--so we could get to bed as soon as possible, as we were more tired than hungry; but we had reckoned without our host, who began to pray: "Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the many blessings which we have so abundantly received from Thy hand this day. . ." and this seemingly endless litany was like a tapeworm coming out of the fellow, during which time sounds could be heard coming repeatedly from the children reclining against the walls in the dark, sounds which were very much suited to have a very disturbing effect upon our meditation. Exhausted as we all were, the sultry air which was filled with all kinds of vapors began to make me drowsy during the prolonged prayer. Suddenly, the roof, described above, began to crack over our heads, becoming worse and worse, and in a few moments large quantities of dirt and litter came falling down upon us and our meal. The next moment a large ox broke through the roof with all four feet, but remained hanging with his belly across one of the rafters, bellowing piteously. Our "cave father" was naturally wholly enraged, and stared at the ceiling. When the ox had settled down so that he was kicking with all four feet above the table, the fellow who was still praying, clenched his fist, which he shook threateningly at the unfortunate ox and thundered a mighty "God damn you!" Our meal, of course, was done for. The next thing to do was to release the ox from his unfor-

tunate hanging place, and this was accomplished by fastening an ox chain about his head and, hitching a yoke of oxen thereto, through our united efforts, we dragged him off without any visible signs of harm. The hole in the roof was temporarily patched and all of us lay down to sleep, we hunters, however, sleeping the sleep of the just. Through the temporary opening in the roof the air became purer and cooler in the dugout.

The next day we returned home, having enjoyed immensely a characteristic hunting episode of those times. Such times are not forgotten.



## CHAPTER VI.

### HUNTING SOUTH OF THE PLATTE

Further hunting adventures and episodes characteristic of those days taken from the life of several pioneer settlers.

In the late fall of 1860, Christian Andresen and one of the Vieregg brothers (James Vieregg, as I recall) had two loads of corn that they wanted to take to Fort Kearny and sell. After delivering the corn, they planned to go on a buffalo hunt, and Andresen invited me to take part "as a hunter," since Andresen was not very handy with a rifle, but wished to have a winter's supply of buffalo or other wild game. I gladly accepted this proposition, partly because I wished to have a supply of meat for my family, and partly because these fall hunting parties had a great attraction for me—in my younger days I was a passionate and very eager hunter. Besides the three of us, Eggert Gottsche and a certain Otto Rawohl also took part. This time we planned to hunt on the Republican River, about forty miles south of Fort Kearny. But at Fort Kearny we heard, and the report was confirmed by officers, that about 1000 Sioux Indians had gone into camp there and, only a few days previously a group of officers from the Fort, who had undertaken a hunting trip on the Republican, had been disarmed and sent home with a warning which could not be misunderstood, "That they would have their noses and ears cut off," if they attempted to hunt buffalo on their hunting grounds again, and all further attempts would result in death for the hunters. From their point of view, the Sioux Indians were entirely within their rights. All the officers with whom I discussed the matter advised us to give up our hunt, and the commander of the Fort said: "You are fools if you try to hunt there." We considered the matter very thoroughly and soberly weighed the pros and cons. We came to the following conclusion: That wherever 1000 In-

dians were located, few buffalo would be found within a range of twenty to thirty miles, ergo we would take good care to stay away. But "closer" to the Fort, buffalo probably would be more plentiful--frightened away from the Republican by the Indians. In a word, we were convinced that within ten or fifteen miles of the Fort it would be possible to shoot all the buffalo we could use. Should we happen to come in conflict with a Sioux scouting party, it would probably be worse for the Indians than for us, as we had two good teams of horses, and were well armed; at any rate, much better than any Indian of those days. When I disclosed my plan to Colonel May and asked him to lend each of us two army revolvers with necessary ammunition, he remarked laughingly that we could try it if we wanted to take the chance--and so we received the revolvers. I had a first rate revolver of my own--I alone could thus fire eighteen shots without reloading--besides our long-range rifles. Thus equipped we set out toward evening, going south from Fort Kearny into the hills. After driving about ten miles, we saw large herds of buffalo grazing on the plains in all directions, southeast, south and southwest, but we could not shoot any that evening, because the region was too flat to get near the buffalo. Too, night was approaching and a variety of things had to be considered. We must have a good camping place near drinkable water, and since there was no firewood to be found in the whole region, we had to gather enough dry "buffalo chips," to keep our campfire going. We retreated a considerable distance and soon found, in a deep gully, the desired camping place for the night.

We soon collected a sufficient supply of dry buffalo chips. After the horses had been fed, they were securely chained to the wagons, and coffee was cooked on the smouldering fire. We refrained from frying anything, substituting other edibles.

About an hour later we were all sitting around the smouldering manure fire smoking our pipes and talking--but a depressed atmosphere was distinctly noticeable.

The night was pitch dark, and the sky heavily overcast. Suddenly, near our camp, there resounded the howl of a prairie wolf, which was answered immediately by the howl of hundreds of big gray, as well as prairie, wolves. Evidently some of the beasts had smelled the bacon in our wagon. This music, in more

or less volume, continued for a long time. The horses showed their uneasiness by stamping their feet, and the conversation by the campfire subsided.

Andresen was the first to speak his mind frankly, "As soon as it is daylight, I'm going home; you can do as you please, for all I care."

I was dependent on Andresen, as the team of horses and wagon belonged to him. I remained silent and did my share of thinking. All the others maintained silence, although Vieregg and Gottsche also seemed undecided and did not say much. That all felt nervous was as clear as day, despite the darkness. One after another they rolled in their wool blankets and buffalo robes, until I sat alone by the buffalo chip fire and pursued my thoughts. The owners of the horses had finally come to a decision—to return home. It was not surprising that this depressed atmosphere had arisen where, if it came to the worst, noses and ears were at stake; and it was not impossible that we would have an encounter with the Sioux. This infernal but for me highly interesting and exceedingly welcome "wolf howling concert" is just the thing to bring fear and horror to the tenderfoot, but Andresen had already experienced a similar "concert" on the South Loup River the year before. That time, of course, there were no 1000 Sioux Indians nearby who had expressed a desire to cut off noses and ears, which, as you know, is not regarded as a beauty aid. But I had to reckon with the wishes of my comrades and arrange accordingly.

It may have been ten o'clock when I sneaked away and climbed a nearby hill. The others still sat by the buffalo chip fire and considered. Arriving at the top of the hill I actually saw now and then in the far distance what appeared to be weak flashes of a fire; perhaps the campfire of the Sioux, who feeling secure in their own land, took no precaution to shield their night fires to avoid attracting possible enemies. Finally I too lay down to sleep, but my plan was made, and in every respect I was satisfied with what I was going to do.

Andresen had a strong team of horses, and Vieregg's team consisted of a mustang pony and a smaller Indian pony, which was an excellent hunting horse. He was entirely unafraid of rifle fire, although not as fast a runner as the mustang. The

latter was an excellent racer, but was very restless at the sound of a shot, and therefore almost useless for hunting. I had taken all precautions—nothing was overlooked, and with the daybreak, when the others were still sound asleep, I arose, without making any noise. Like a thief in the night I went about my work—saddled Joe (this was the small black pony belonging to Vieregg) took a rifle, a revolver and all the hunting equipment that belonged to me, and led Joe quietly away by the bridle, far enough so that the trampling of a horse would not wake up the sleepers. Then, at a sharp gallop, I headed for the hunting grounds, where we had seen the buffalo herds the evening before. I had ridden about half an hour and, since it was not light enough to see very far, I had slowed down when I suddenly heard the sound of a horse's hoofs behind me. My attention had scarcely been called to the noise before the riddle was solved, for Otto Rawohl was coming at full gallop on the mustang. Rawohl had noticed how I had slipped away, had been wise enough to wait until I had got safely away on Joe. Then he got up, saddled the mustang, took my other rifle, as well as the revolver loaned him at Fort Kearny, and also sneaked away. What Christian Andresen would do under these circumstances concerned us very little, for, capricious as he no doubt was, he was best managed when placed in a dependent situation. That was the position in which he now found himself, since, if he wanted to carry out his threat of leaving us, he would have to return alone in this instance to our settlement without meat. Unconcerned about such an eventuality, Rawohl and I began to hunt buffalo—but the herd, which we had seen the evening before, had disappeared, as if swept away by the wind. Only a single buffalo grazed on the plain before us. Meanwhile the sun came up and we made use of this by riding between the buffalo and the sun. As the wind came from the buffalo's direction, he could not get our scent, and, blinded by the rising sun as he was, he allowed us to approach within 400 steps before, scenting danger, he raised his small tail and tried to run away as quickly as possible. Then the chase began. At a brisk gallop we dashed across the prairie—Rawohl ahead on the faster mustang and I, on the slower Joe, in the near. Soon the mustang was at the side of the fleeing buffalo when, the buffalo turning to



attack his pursuer, the mustang jumped aside and checked; but this momentary halt in the buffalo's flight brought my mount within rifle range. A few more moments were enough; my Joe stood still as a post, and the heavy bullet (Spitzkugel) of my gun hit the back part of the buffalo, wounding him so severely that he was unable to escape. The animal now moved on but only walking or trotting very slowly. We decided to drive the wounded buffalo toward our camp, and this was easily done. A tame cow could not have been driven more easily; only when we came too near him would he turn and attempt to attack us.

We had driven the wounded animal a considerable distance in this manner when we noticed five buffalo grazing in a valley. This caused us to put an end to the wounded animal, so as to secure more game if possible. A well-directed shot brought the buffalo to earth. Then we carefully approached the grazing buffalo. Hobbling our ponies, we succeeded in killing the nicest specimen in the bunch. Now we decided to return to camp, because, if it came to the worst, we already had a sufficient supply of meat—not to mention that we had also become very hungry.

Upon arrival at camp, we found only Vieregg, who had coffee and pancakes ("slap jacks" as we called them) ready for us.

I was afraid that Christian Andresen might have really picked up and left to go home, but that was not the case. With the awakening and the daybreak, the ghosts of the night had disappeared, and my surmise that he would think better of it came true. In the meantime, a very strong wind had arisen.

We had finished our meal and fed and watered our horses when Andresen and Gottsche, with Andresen's team, returned to the camping place from their search for us. They too had seen a buffalo lying on the ground during their tour. Believing it to be one of the buffalo we had killed, they stopped and Andresen went over to the buffalo to look him over. Quietly the animal lay there, but when Andresen got around to look at his head he noticed, to his astonishment and fright, that the buffalo was alive, quietly chewing his cud. Andresen quickly retreated a few steps, pulled out his revolver and fired. Up jumped the buffalo and, without looking back, rushed off across the prairie and soon disappeared from the view of the puzzled Andresen.

Since Andresen approached the animal against the wind it was very clear why he had been able to come so close to the buffalo unnoticed.

But now there was work to be done. We immediately broke camp and proceeded, with our wagons, to the slaughtered animals. We had hardly begun skinning one of the animals, when in the far distance, three more buffalo came in sight. I at once prepared myself for the chase as they were approaching us very rapidly. The other four men of our party remained at work, skinning. It so happened that the three buffalo upon which I now had designs were following a well-worn buffalo path along a ridge between two ravines which finally came together in one ravine. At the end of this ridge path, where the two ravines or sloughs came together and joined, I took up my position, since the buffalo path on which the animals were approaching led down into the larger ravine, and eventually the buffalo must come within range. The wind, which had become almost a gale, was favorable and the high wall of the slough gave me cover so that the buffalo could neither see me nor get my scent. As chance often plays a part, so it happened this time, because the buffalo stopped their march only 100 steps away from me and peacefully began to graze. They couldn't possibly have made it more convenient for me. It was but a moment before one of the buffalo, shot through the heart, dropped to the ground. The other two were not alarmed as the stormy wind carried away the crack of the gun. I quickly loaded my gun again and gathered in the second buffalo which fell very close to the edge of the slough to the right of my position. Still remaining to be harvested was the third buffalo, who all unconcerned, continued looking for food. A third bullet, passing through the shoulder, brought down the last one, so that he lay down, but with his head still held high. Ready to fire again, I looked across the field of slaughter and noticed that this last animal still held his head up; consequently, he still lived. This buffalo lay near the slough to the left as seen from my position, and about thirty to forty steps distant from the buffalo which my second shot had brought down. To end the matter quickly I decided to follow up the gully to my right in order to get closer to the buffalo which had been shot last, and give him a shot in the head.

Near the buffalo which had fallen to my second shot, I climbed the steep bank of the ravine and found the animal, lying on its side, with legs outstretched toward the gully. The eyes appeared to be dim and lifeless and I noticed no sign of life in the animal as it lay there. Moreover, it had broken down under my fire, and I did not doubt that it was dead. Taking cover behind the outstretched and, as I thought, dead buffalo, so as to finish the buffalo which was still alive, I crawled between the outstretched legs of the presumably dead animal, cocked my rifle and used the corpse as a support for my rifle, when he jumped up. What then happened was over in a flash. I sprang backward involuntarily from under the buffalo and, as it was near the edge of the slough, I rolled head over heels down the gully for about twelve to fifteen feet, holding the cocked gun in my hands. Fortunately, the gun did not discharge, nor did I suffer any injury. Without looking around, I ran as fast as I could to the place from which I had shot the animals, for I had seen a large gray wolves' den there, into which I crawled feet first and waited for what might come. But nothing happened. I soon crawled out and looked carefully over the edge of the ravine. Then I saw that the buffalo was tramping around in a circle, now and then digging into the ground with his short horns and tossing dirt and sod into the air.

I was certain that the animal was mortally wounded, and so I decided to leave it alone, and, following the deep gully, I hurried to the place where my four hunting companions were busily skinning the first slain buffalo. My hunting comrades were very much astonished to see me return so quickly, not having heard any shooting, though they could see the buffalo clearly.

Andresen asked, "Why don't you shoot the buffalo?" "There they are," he continued, pointing with his finger in the direction of the three buffalo, "all three lying down."

"Yes, and they will stay there, until we load them on to our wagons," was my answer, and then I hastily related the adventure that had befallen me.

When we reached the place with our wagons all three buffalo were dead and we could proceed immediately with our work of getting the meat ready for transportation.



These last three buffalo were all young animals so we threw away large portions of the meat of the first two that had been killed, especially of the first one, a very old animal. The wolves closed in from all directions before we finished our work, and we left them a good meal when we started back to Fort Kearny that same evening. We had been gone only about twenty-four hours when we returned, our wagons heavily loaded with excellent meat.

The next morning we returned the borrowed revolvers with thanks, and all were glad that we had had such a successful hunt without suffering any damage to our noses and ears. Our wagons being heavily loaded with meat it took us two more days to get back to our young settlement.

It is usually assumed that in relating "hunting stories" they are often embellished in order to make them as interesting as possible; but I give you my assurance that in this little history of our settlement each and every attempt to color the narrative will be carefully avoided. I am concerned about presenting to those living after us, as true and faithful a picture as possible of the lives and incidents of those times, and certainly the pioneer life presented enough that was interesting.

To people unacquainted with hunting and particularly buffalo hunting it may seem almost unbelievable, that I could have shot three buffalo, one after another, without frightening away two of them when I shot the first one. I have tried to explain how it happened, but will add a few items which should serve to make it clearer and therefore more credible to readers of this little pamphlet.

Two years after the hunting trip described above, four of us went on a buffalo hunt—this time on Elm Creek, thirty-five miles west of Fort Kearny on the north side of the Platte River. Henry Vieregg, who is still living and generally known in the city and in the country (1907) was one of the party. One morning we discovered six buffalo and Vieregg and I approached them carefully. A dried up water course, such as is frequently found there, afforded us cover, so that, walking upright, we could approach to within 100 paces, or even less, of the buffalo. Though we had only muzzle-loading guns that time, Henry Vieregg and I brought down all six buffalo, one after another,



without moving a step out of our position. In this case the buffalo could hear the crash of our guns very well, but that seemed to disturb them very little. They probably looked up when the shots rang out, but, since they could not see us, and a favorable wind did not let them get our scent, they soon resumed their feeding on the grass. Five of the six fell dead on the spot, all lying near to each other; only one, which was not hit exactly in the right place by the bullet, wandered off. We followed him a short distance and brought him down. It is a different story, when the buffalo gets the scent of the human being. Then he flees when the hunter is still miles away.

The buffalo depends mainly upon his highly developed sense of smell—very little upon his sight and less upon his hearing. The deer also has his best protection in his sense of smell, next to that, his hearing, and very little does the deer depend on his eyes. Antelope, of which I shot many, for the antelope hunt was my passion because it required a real hunter to secure this shy and vigilant animal, depend primarily on their extraordinarily sharp sight, hearing next, and only last upon their sense of smell. Therefore, when we went buffalo hunting and this happened every fall during the first ten years of our settlement, we took into consideration the peculiarities of the game we hunted.

I have known one of our pioneers (the name in this instance does not matter) who, in spite of the fact that he had a good double-barreled shot gun and often tried to shoot rabbits or prairie chickens, was never able to bag any. One day right after a snowfall I saw him, gun under his arm and "specks" on his nose, stumbling around in a big ravine, following a rabbit's trail. I, too, was following tracks in the snow, and as I crossed the ones he was following, I discovered, to my great surprise, that the above mentioned nimrod was following the rabbit tracks in the direction from which the rabbit had come. When I returned later, heavily loaded with booty, I took up this trail and found and shot the rabbit within 100 steps of the house of this hunter "par excellence."

A hunter of that sort, even if in possession of the best of arms, naturally would have starved in the midst of thousands of buffalo, elk, and antelope had not the Town Company furnished

the food and other people carried him along. Such a character must also be mentioned if we are to present a true picture of our first settlement and those who took part.

Here we may consider another eccentric character who by preference was the cause of all kinds of amusement because of the foolish deeds he committed. This was Frederick Vatje, a blacksmith by trade, well advanced in years and like most of the settlers in those days--unmarried.

For the better understanding of the low-German verses given below, I must mention the fact that in the fall of 1857 the first settlers cut and put up a great deal of hay with their scythes (about 400 tons--2000 pounds per ton) because there was at that time no practical farmer directing the pioneer settlers, and no one had any idea how much hay would be needed to winter about forty head of cattle. This oversized provision for wintering cattle, however, might have been a great profit to our settlement if those charged with leadership who were "on the spot" had only half-way done their duty or if they had had the capacity and prudence to communicate with Fort Kearny, only forty miles away. From Davenport, I had called Fred Hedde's attention to this, but my advice was not heeded.

At Fort Kearny, especially during this same winter of 1857-1858, there was a great shortage of feed for government horses, mules and particularly for all the cattle intended for slaughter. The commandant, Colonel May told me later that he would gladly have paid \$40 per ton, and would have brought the cattle to the settlement, if he had known that there was hay in such abundance.<sup>1</sup>

Returning to Frederick Vatje, who was known among our settlers by the nickname "our countryman Gonnebek" (Landsmann Gonnebek), because he was a native of the village of Gonnebek in Holstein, it must be mentioned that he had a very sharp tongue. In his suggestive manner, he liked to pin nicknames on other people, especially when not favorably disposed toward them or when, in his opinion, somebody deserved

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<sup>1</sup> Colonel May did not take command until July, 1858 (see footnote 3, Chapter IV). If this statement ascribed to him is correct, Colonel May must have referred to the willingness of his predecessor to pay \$40 a ton.

it. Thus, for example, while he himself was "our countryman Gonnebek," he named Detlef Sass the "peasant governor" (Bauervogt; the house in which Wm. A. Hagge, Theodor Nagel, Christian Menck and Herman Vasold lived, the "manor house" (Herrenhaus) because these people were distributors of provisions and were in a little closer relation with the Town Company; the house where Heinrich Egge, Detlef Sass and Heinrich Schaaf lived, the "Trinity," as a result, it always was known by this name. Peter Stuhr, his closest neighbor, he named "Pit."

As a result of the great prairie fire on January 18, 1859, there was a serious shortage of forage crops for all cattle in the settlement and Frederick Vatje moved upstream some 30 miles to the island, Grand Island, taking his cow named Rosa along. At that time the government cattle for slaughter were kept on this island known by the name "Braaks Camp." Detlef Sass who was poetically inclined and was loved for his sense of humor liked to make rhymes and made among others a poem of 24 stanzas which was to be sung to a certain melody and which had especial bearing upon "our countryman Gonnebek." Many a time this song was sung in chorus by our old settlers.

Since it was impossible for me to reproduce the whole poem, which has interest principally for the older settlers only, since only fragments could be given me "by the author himself," I am simply putting it down as well as I can in the Low-German of Holstein.<sup>2</sup>

Frederick Vatje poisoned himself with a bottle of whiskey mixed with strychnine which he drank on the bank of the Wood River, where he was found dead.

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<sup>2</sup> Then follows the poem. There is the lament that the times of abundance are gone. The hay is all burned, but "Friederich" as speculator has taken Rosa and gone to Braaks Camp. His hopes and activities and misfortunes are treated in a humorous fashion. The "peasant governor" is lightly touched on and "Friederich's" neighbor "Pit" figures in the narrative. The distrust of "Friederich" toward "the Trinity" comes to light and he is clever and does not fall for the "traps" set for him. And yet, in spite of the difficulties encountered in dealing with "Friederich," "our countryman Gonnebek," the poet wishes also to remember "his good side" and to excuse his failings and avoid saying anything ill of him.

## Chapter VII.

### INDIAN RAIDS

Outbreak of the Civil War and the consequences thereof for our new settlement in Hall County, Nebraska. Outbreak of the Indian hostilities. Joseph P. Smith and three boys murdered by the Sioux Indians.

During the first year of the settlement we had no difficulties whatever with the Indians; neither with Pawnee, Omaha, Otoe, nor Sioux, Cheyenne, Kiowa and Arapahoe, although the Pawnee were in continual strife with the Sioux and their allies, and their attacks upon each other occurred yearly. Sometimes, after a battle, they would pass through our settlement with their booty and trophies, the latter consisting of the bloody scalps of defeated enemies fluttering in the wind on long poles. As they passed, the brown warriors chanted their monotonous songs. So little did we fear the Indians at that time, that in the month of September, 1860 we didn't even stop with the haymaking while a battle raged between the Pawnee and Sioux on the island opposite my farm. We could hear every shot as the Sioux pursued the Pawnee who fled downstream. Fleeing Indian women came to our house, but went immediately to seek security on Prairie Creek.

This feeling of security was not to last much longer. When the war with the Southern States broke out and the first shot was fired at Fort Sumter all troops stationed on the frontier were ordered east. Nearly all the officers in Fort Kearny were Southerners and therefore hostile to the North. A certain Lieutenant Tyler who was left with a small detachment as a garrison at Fort Kearny, spiked the twenty cannon at the Fort very soon after the departure of Colonel May (real friend of our settlement) with the largest part of the troops, under the pretext that he feared an attack of Missouri rebels from St. Joseph.



Soon after playing this trick, Tyler resigned his commission and tried to join the rebels--but was caught in Philadelphia and was imprisoned. Upon his person was found a Confederate officer's commission in which he was named a Colonel.<sup>1</sup>

We were warned to leave the settlement--in fact, the whole territory of Nebraska--by the Fort Kearny officers before they left, as the Indians would certainly massacre everyone after the withdrawal of troops.

Up to this time the Indian attacks had occurred only near the Rocky Mountains, but we in Hall County were soon to have our share of them. Closer and closer came the attacks and destruction by hostile Indians in the upper Platte Valley--and the settlers in our county viewed the future with anxiety.

It was on February 5, 1862, that the first massacre of whites in Hall County by the Sioux took place.

Joseph P. Smith and his son-in-law, Anderson, farmers on the Wood River, about twelve miles west of Grand Island, accompanied by the former's sons (William, twelve years old, and Charles, nine years old) and his grandson, Alex Anderson (about fourteen years of age), drove out early in the morning of this day to the north channel of the Platte River, about two and a half miles south of their farms, to bring in timber. Anderson drove back home with the wagonload of logs at nine o'clock in the morning, while the others remained in the woods with two teams of horses belonging to Smith. When Anderson returned to the woods around noon, to get another load, he found all of them most brutally massacred.

Smith, with seven arrows through his body, lay face down on the ice, each hand holding one of his sons. His son William, pierced through with an arrow, one cheek cut from mouth to ear, was still alive. He lived until he reached home, but soon bled to death. The other son, Charles, had his skull crushed, apparently by a savage war club. Young Anderson was found

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<sup>1</sup> On January 28, 1861, Tyler was commissioned a captain. According to army records, he was dismissed from the service on June 6, 1861. He is recorded as a prisoner with the Confederate rank of lieutenant-colonel in 1862, and was exchanged with a Union officer of that rank. He was a brilliant Confederate officer, later rising to the position of brigadier-general in the Southern Army. Watkins, *Nebr. St. Hist. Soc. Publications*, XVI, 259-260.

some distance away in the woods with a shattered skull. This horrible butchery had been committed by a band of eight mounted Sioux Indians. Smith's four horses had been taken along.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph P. Smith had come from Lake County, Indiana, in 1861, and established a small store on his farm.

The news spread like lightning and the settlers of Hall County were soon in the saddle to capture the murderers. Jesse Eldridge with seven other farmers from Wood River, captured seventeen armed Sioux with bows and arrows in a dry channel of the Platte River about eighteen miles east of Fort Kearny, the Indians apparently seeking to hide as the farmers approached.

The commander at Fort Kearny, Captain Johnson,<sup>3</sup> hearing of this, demanded the surrender of the captured Indians to him. The farmers complied with this request. After a short time, however, these seventeen Sioux were set free by Captain Johnson. The rascal remarked that he would rather see twenty farmers dead than one Indian as he feared that Fort Kearny could be overwhelmed by Sioux, who were camping in large numbers further up the Platte River, as well as on the Republican River.

Of course, it was proved that none of these seventeen Sioux took part in the Smith massacre, but this scoundrel Johnson had no right to turn the Indians loose. He should have held them as hostages until the murderers were given up by their tribe.

In August, 1864, the Sioux Indians were again in the hills, not far from George Martin's ranch, about eighteen miles southwest of Grand Island on the south side of the Platte River. Two of Martin's sons (Nathaniel and Robert) mounted a pony and hurried to drive home the cattle that were grazing in the hills. While the boys were gathering the cattle, about 100 Indians approached and started to chase them. The boys saw that it was impossible to get the cattle to the ranch, as the Indians

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<sup>2</sup> Slight variations of this account are given by Andreas, 933; John Thomssen, *Grand Island Independent*, June 29, 1907; Mrs. Elizabeth Markey, *Grand Island Independent*, July 2, 1932.

<sup>3</sup> This is probably Captain John A. Thompson, who was stationed at Fort Kearny in the winter of 1861-2. *Nebr. St. Hist. Soc. Publications*, XXI, 321; *Fort Kearny Day Book*, 1858-1862, Ms. copy, *Nebr. Hist. Soc. Files*.

were mounted, so they both jumped on the pony and tried to reach the ranch, followed by the Indians.

However, the pursuing savages were soon within range and sending a shower of arrows and bullets whizzing about the boys. In spite of this it seemed for a time that they would be lucky enough to reach the safety of their well-fortified house, as they were not hit; but before they reached home both boys on the pony were pierced by an arrow, which went through their bodies near their ribs and remained so that both boys were pinned together with one arrow. In this condition they succeeded in nearing the ranch, before they weakened and slid down off their horse to the ground and thus fell into the hands of the pursuing Indians. An Indian had his knife out ready to scalp them when another said to him in English, "Let the boys alone," and the lives of the boys were spared.

These Indians took several head of cattle and horses and hastily withdrew, because shot after shot was fired at them from the fortified ranch. Several of their ponies and one Indian were wounded. The latter, however, was carried off by his companions.

As for the boys, Nathaniel and Robert Martin, their mother pulled the arrow out and under good care they finally recovered completely. They still live in Hall County (1907), both happily married farmers. The Indians attacked the ranch of George Martin several times, stealing cattle and horses, but no lives were lost.

Not so fortunate was another family which was attacked by the Sioux on July 24, 1867. This was the family at the ranch of P. Campbell, a Scotchman, about ten miles south of Grand Island on the south side of the Platte River. The unfortified house was attacked and a lady named Mrs. Thurston Warren was killed by a gun shot, and her small son by an arrow. Two girls, Mr. Campbell's nieces, seventeen and nineteen years old, and two small twin boys, four years old, were carried off as prisoners by the savages. At the same time a German, Heinrich Dose, was killed near the same place.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The younger Campbell girl, later Mrs. J. P. Dunlap, was buried on the original homestead in 1924. L. C. Dunlap, her son, erected a monument to her memory. On October 15, 1924, the cemetery plot on land formerly owned by George Graham, was deeded to the Nebraska State Historical Society. *Nebraska History Magazine*. v. VII, No. 1, 24-27.

The Indians plundered Campbell's house, killed his cattle and made their escape.

Several months later the government bought back the two girls and the twins, giving the Indians \$4000 and, in addition, had to return a Sioux squaw with papoose who had been captured about the same time on Elm Creek by Ed Arnold's Pawnee Scouts.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Indians who made this raid were probably Cheyenne, or Cheyenne and Sioux. The Indian woman and boy, exchanged at North Platte for the white captives, were Cheyenne captured on August 17, 1867 in a fight between the Pawnee Scouts and Turkey Leg's band of Cheyenne on Plum Creek. Robert Bruce, *The Fighting Norths and Pawnee Scouts*, 26, 30-31. George Bird Grinnell, *Two Great Scouts and Their Pawnee Battalion*, 145-147.

E. W. Arnold, a later resident of Grand Island and first register of the land office there, was captain of Company A of the Pawnee Battalion commanded by Major Frank North. *Ibid.*, 138; *Nebraska History Magazine*, v. XI, No. 3, 119-120.



## Chapter VIII.

### GRAND ISLAND FORTIFIED

Exaggerated reports of Indian outrages. Flight of many settlers. The German settlers in our settlement do not flee. Fort Independence and the first United States flag in Hall County. Organization and self-protection. Fort O. K. General Major Curtis with troops. How Hall County received a cannon.

In August and September 1864, horrible stories of Indian atrocities, supposed to have been committed in the upper Platte Valley, were circulated. Immediately after this came information that the Indians (allied Sioux, Cheyenne, Kiowa and Arapahoe) were going down the river in large numbers to attack Fort Kearny and to lay waste the farms in the Platte Valley.

Many feared that even the city of Omaha on the Missouri River would be taken by the Indians.

The small number of soldiers at Fort Kearny who undoubtedly were unable to defend themselves in case of an attack, certainly could not protect the settlement and settlers.

A panicky fear filled the minds of nearly all of the settlers and, from the upper Platte Valley down to Columbus, the settlers were deserting their homesteads. Only a very few took the risk of staying. Yes, even east of Columbus many people fled, anxious to save their precious lives. It was also reported as true that all of the clerks in Omaha were armed, that the hills around Omaha were occupied by outposts, and there were rumors that the Governor of the state and his family had fled across the Missouri to Council Bluffs, fearing a sudden attack by these savage Indians.

On the 13th and 14th of August, 1864, the military road along the Platte river in the neighborhood of Grand Island was crowded with fleeing people for a distance of twenty miles. Wagons heavily loaded with household goods, provisions, bedding

and clothing; herds of horses and cattle; people on foot and horseback hurried along in great confusion. Rising dust clouds, produced by fleeing people and animals, indicated the effect of the above mentioned rumors on these people.

It was a sad sight to see all these people leaving their homesteads, their ripening corn, potatoes and other field crops, in a word—abandoning everything. But the German settlement at Grand Island was not deserted.

For several years past I had occupied myself with building a fortified blockhouse, although progress was rather slow as I was dependent largely on my own exertions. But I had completed the building, all but the roof. It was built of the heaviest and straightest cottonwood logs, 24 x 24 feet square and provided with twenty-five loopholes for shooting. This I had done for the protection of my own family in case of Indian disturbances. When these actually broke out, as many others as I had room for joined us immediately. Counting children, there were thirty-five of us who found comparative security against Indian attack, in effective position to defend ourselves.

In a few days with united effort, we had our little fort ready and could raise our American flag with stars and stripes over it.<sup>1</sup> We had all the arms we could use and I had already provided for about forty pounds of powder and other ammunition.

In one corner of this fort we had a well, and there was no shortage of food; cartridges were made for different caliber fire arms; and then we went on making further preparations by building an 88-foot long stable, underground, with the roof only a few feet above ground. This underground horse stable was connected with our blockhouse by means of a tunnel so we could reach the stable without going outside. Three more port holes were cut about eight inches above the ground at the far end of the stable. We had erected a corral within shooting distance for our cattle. We proudly named our fortified blockhouse "Fort Independence."

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<sup>1</sup> This first American flag to be raised in Hall County was made by Henrietta Axelsen in Davenport, Iowa. Stolley, *Grand Island Independent*, June 29, 1907. According to Emil Roeser, Grand Island, this flag is now in Hall County Historical Society room in the Grand Island Library.--Ed.



The scene includes Fort Independence and the William Stolley home, 1864. Left: Fort Independence, built of logs and covered with sod; the corn crib and the Hann house for which William Stolley traded one red cow. Sketch made by Frank Coker. Trees are sketched in by error.





As our settlement at that time counted a little over 200 inhabitants, other protective measures had to be found for those who could not find shelter in my blockhouse. It was decided to fortify the O. K. store, which was situated about one and a half miles south of the (present) courthouse, and which had been established in August, 1862, by Henry A. Koenig and Frederick Wiebe. Wilhelm Thavenet was the engineer on this fortification project; Dr. A. Thorspeken, Commandant, and Friedrich Doll, Lieutenant.

Around all the buildings an earthen wall was erected, each corner being provided with a projecting tower in which there were port holes with which to prevent the attackers from using the wall for cover. In this fortification there were, so far as I could determine, about sixty-eight men and 100 women and children. Mounted scouts were sent out every day to reconnoiter the territory in all directions; in addition, piles of straw and brush were conveniently placed that could be fired as an alarm and signal to those not in a place of safety, in the event that hostile Indians approached.

The territorial government was asked for arms and ammunition, and seventeen old muskets, three of them without locks, were sent to the people in O. K. Fort.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the O. K. people were happy to get them glad to pay the freight charges, for, though we in "Fort Independence" were well supplied, they lacked weapons. Finally, on August 22, 1865,<sup>3</sup> Major General S. R. Curtis arrived, with the First Regiment Nebraska Veteran Volunteer Cavalry. They brought a six-pound cannon with them.

General S. R. Curtis inspected both fortifications and expressed the greatest admiration for the manner in which the settlers had prepared themselves for any eventualities. On his recommendation the cannon was left with the German settlement for further protection, with special observation, that, "by rights," this cannon should be given to the settlement so that it could be

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<sup>2</sup> Also known as Fort Curtis (*Nebraska History Magazine*, v. XVI, No. 4, 226) and Fort Sauer Kraut. Norman Reese, "Stage Driving in Early Days by One of Them," *Grand Island Independent*, July 2, 1932.

<sup>3</sup> 1864. Stolley described the activities of this summer of panic in a letter to his brother in New Orleans, dated September 10, 1864. The letter (translated) is printed in *Nebraska History Magazine*, v. XVI, No. 4, 221-227.

preserved for future times, as a recognition of the courage shown by the settlers--as almost all the rest of the settlers for hundreds of miles in the upper Platte Valley had deserted their fields and homes.

Convinced of the security of the Grand Island settlement, General S. R. Curtis departed on the same day that he arrived here, in order to again provide Fort Kearny with a garrison.

In later years I often tried to arrange that this cannon left by General Curtis should become the property of Hall County. However, many difficulties were connected with this and I was repeatedly informed by our representatives at Washington that this would only be possible by special act of the United States Congress. In 1897, I had occasion to be in Washington personally and took advantage of this opportunity to again make an effort to obtain the cannon for Hall County. This time my efforts were crowned with success.

Soon after my return to Grand Island I received a letter from D. W. Flegler, Brigadier General, Chief of Ordnance, Washington, D. C., dated February 10, 1897, informing me which further steps were necessary, so that the authorities in the War Department could transfer the cannon to Hall County, in accordance with the Act of Congress approved May 22, 1896.<sup>4</sup>

I complied with this request immediately and on September 20, 1897, I received the following letter which is self-explanatory:

Grand Island, Nebr.  
Sept. 20, 1897.

Mr. Wm. Stolley:

We, the county board of Hall County, Nebr., herewith wish to acknowledge that we have received the cannon, which you delivered to us by order of D. W. Flagler, Brig. Gen., Chief of Ordnance, and which had originally been given to you and the old settlers for defence against attack by hostile Indians.

Yours truly,  
Chairman of the County Board  
C. D. Woodward,  
of Hall County, Nebr.

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<sup>4</sup> A general Act providing that condemned ordnance could be given or loaned, subject to regulations of the War or Navy departments. *U.S. Statutes*, XXIX, 133-134.

## Chapter IX.

### SOLDIERS AND INDIANS

The O. K. fortification receives a garrison of twenty men. A rascally captain. Insecurity of life and property. Indian outrages committed against youths.

Soon after the visit of General S. R. Curtis a detachment of soldiers, consisting of one commissioned officer (Captain D. B. Davis) and twenty men of Company E, Seventh Regular Iowa Cavalry, was stationed in the O. K. store fortification.

Thanks to the effective preparations, energetically carried out by the settlers, no Indians dared to attack the settlement. In contrast to this the soldiers who were stationed here for the protection of the settlers, acted like thieves and robbers. They acquired grain by swindle and theft and took cattle wherever they found them; the soldiers drove cattle, including cows ready to have calves, to their camp at a gallop and shot down the ones they wanted without ceremony.<sup>1</sup>

In a word, they carried on as if they were in enemy territory.

In this manner, by order of this "fine" Captain D. B. Davis, and without my knowledge, my cattle were driven from the prairie to the O.K. store and one steer was simply shot down by "our protectors."

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<sup>1</sup> Captain Ware, in 1863 had an experience near Grand Island that indicates the attitude of the military toward livestock—and may have been the cause of the settlers' hostility toward the soldiers:

"In the morning of October 2, 1863, . . . I moved along with the command until we got to a place called the O.K. Store, which I think was the beginning of what is now the city of Grand Island. I remember hearing Grand Island spoken of, and remembering one of our corporals going down to what he called the 'North Channel,' at which time he killed somebody's hog, skinned it and brought it into camp with all appendages cut off, and called it 'antelope' . . ."—Eugene F. Ware, *The Indian War of 1864*, 37.

The settlers immediately told me what had happened and I hurried to the place as fast as I could. The honorable captain stood with arms crossed watching the soldiers skin the ox. I inquired if this were done at his order.

He answered, "Yes, you will be paid for it."

I then asked, "What right have you who are here with your troops to protect us and our property to take my property by force without my consent?"

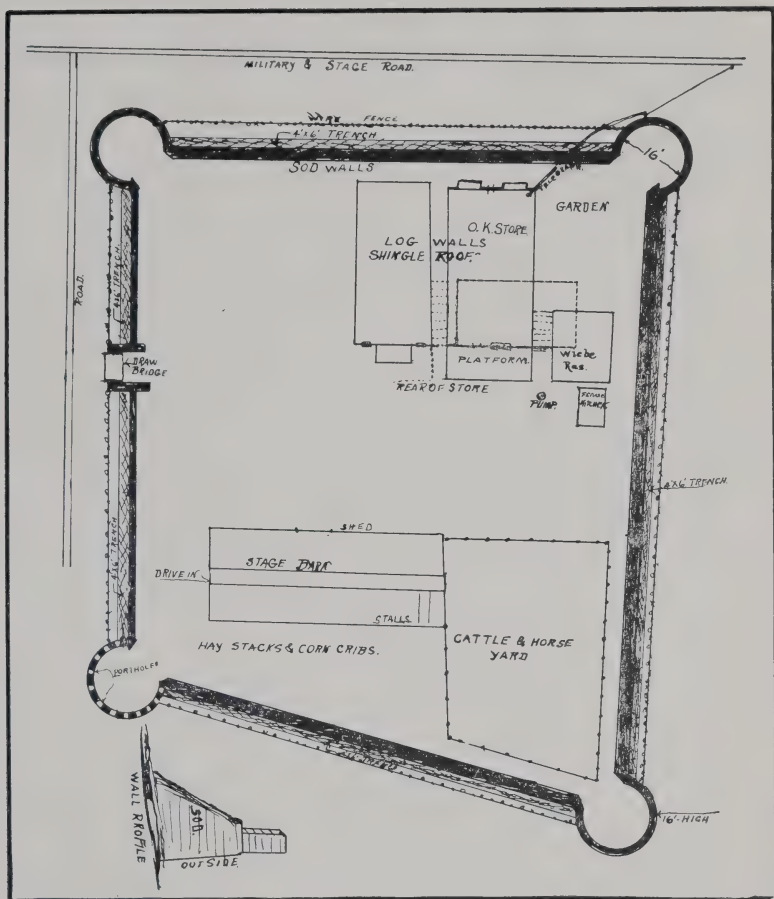
Drawing my revolver and flourishing it under the nose of the brave captain in the presence of his soldiers and a group of settlers, I said, "If you damned rascal of a captain ever again dare attempt to touch any of my property, I shall send a bullet through your head. And what's more, I'm going to file a complaint with your superior officer."

The honorable captain looked very astonished, but did not say a word.

I at once reported the matter to the headquarters of our military department, to the quartermaster general, to our governor, and I received very polite replies, but there the matter rested. I continued to write, making such a row that Captain D. B. Davis and his men were ordered away from here and had to set up a camp about thirty-five miles up the South Loup River in the wilderness where there were no oxen to shoot. At that time this place was generally called "Fort Desolation." I continued my pursuit of this Captain Davis further and further. Perhaps six months had passed, and not one of the people in our settlement had received any pay for what this rascally officer had stolen from them, when we received the report that Captain D. B. Davis with his soldiers had been ordered south.

I immediately wrote directly to General Grant who was the highest in command and at that time in Washington. I briefly explained what this captain had done and wrote in conclusion, "If this robber, Captain D. B. Davis, does not pay me for that ox which he stole from me, when as a soldier, he was supposed to protect us and our property, I shall shoot him down before he ever leaves Nebraska." I marked my letter "Personal." That helped. A dispatch came from Washington to the O. K. store containing this question, "Is Wm. Stolley a loyal citizen?" Answer, "Wm. Stolley is loyal and one of our best citizens." Soon





The plan of the O.K. Store which was used for a fort in 1864.  
Original sketch made by Charles Wasmer.



afterwards, direct from Washington, I received the money for my ox.

But none of the other settlers ever received a red cent for the articles that this fine specimen of an officer had stolen in our settlement. Of course, the money that I received, \$62.50, I had to earn double, with the writing I had done before I received it--but I got it.

The soldiers under the command of this D. B. Davis deserved less criticism, as they, as subordinates, had to carry out the orders of this rascal.

Nor could the Pawnee Indians that we had befriended be trusted at all times, especially when an opportunity presented itself of attacking an individual paleface without danger of losing their own lives. As proof thereof, the following illustration may serve.

In October, 1866, John Vieregg and I went on a four weeks' hunting trip on the Loup River, primarily after beaver. After roaming up and down the stream for over three weeks with varying success, we were thinking about starting home with our hunting booty one day when, toward evening, two Indians joined us. They proved to be "Skidi" (Wolf Indians who are a secondary tribe of Pawnee).

They seemed to be peaceably inclined and begged for something to eat, which was given them in generous quantity. After these Pawnee explained that they were scouting the Loup territory looking for enemy Sioux, they went back across the Loup River to their ponies which, according to their story, they had hidden on Oak Creek, as it was called. But they told us they would come back again *on the following day* at about nine o'clock to trade some deer skins.

All afternoon I had observed, on the other side of the Loup River, a herd of elk numbering about eighty head, and I had a great desire to take home a nice bull elk if possible. John Vieregg, owner of the ox team, was not very enthusiastic, for to him the crossing of the Loup River with its quicksand presented great difficulties. Therefore I accompanied the two Pawnee to see where they waded across the stream. We found out that the water was not over knee deep and the quicksand did not seem bad. One of the Indians stopped in midstream and called to me,

half in Pawnee and half in English: "*Kaki, heap a water.*" (There is not much water.)

After they left we went out and set our beaver traps, John Vieregg, upstream, while I followed the river downstream. It was already late when we had finished this work and settled down by the campfire. We had our camping place in a low ravine such as are often found between bends on the Loup River. I had dug out a seat for myself on the north side of the ravine with a spade so that I could sit comfortably upon an earthen bench and also have a support for my back. Before me--a few steps away--crackled our bright campfire. On the left side of the fire sat John Vieregg on an overturned waterbucket. Directly south and toward the river--about six or seven steps from the fire--stood our wagon, with our loaded rifles and shotguns leaning against it. Thus we sat chatting; I was trying to convince John Vieregg that it would not be dangerous to cross the river with the ox team. The night was pitch black, for the sky was cloudy, and it was very quiet, with not a breath of air.

It may have been about ten o'clock when a slight rustling in the almost man-high slough grass near the river attracted my attention, so that I involuntarily looked in that direction. By the light of our brightly burning campfire I saw the grass moving as if a large animal were passing through it. Silently and quick as a flash I jumped to the wagon, grasped a big long shotgun to my shoulder and was aiming, when the two Indians jumped out--one holding a short gun in his hand and the other a bow and arrow.

The latter cried hastily, "*Kaki heap a water.*"

John Vieregg yelled, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot! They mean no harm. They only wish to spend the night with us."

I was of a decidedly different opinion, for if they came as friends, they would not need to creep through the high grass, especially when it had been agreed that they would come the next morning when the sun stood at a certain spot in the sky. I will always regret that I allowed John to persuade me not to shoot them both down on the spot. We took the Indians' weapons and made them sit by the fire through the night while we lay down under our wagon in the dark. I, at least, did not sleep, but lay with a shotgun, both barrels cocked, and did not let these sus-



picious friends out of my sight for an instant. Practically all through the night the Indians roasted deer ribs in the campfire and their meal seemed endless. They had brought nothing to trade. The next morning they went away and we gathered our traps and returned home.

About a year later, however, John Vieregg was to discover for himself, and that in broad daylight and almost at the identical place, that "carelessness" was very ill-advised in those days; though he himself escaped with sound skin. It was during the first days of January, 1868, that John Vieregg, in company with Hans Klingenberg, as well as two boys named Christian Gottsche and Christian Tramm, fifteen and sixteen years of age respectively, were again hunting for elk and deer in this locality.

The hunting was very poor, for there was no game to be seen and so they decided to return home; but each of the men wished to go to Oak Creek and get a young, slender oak tree, which they needed for making wagon tongues. On the morning of January 6, 1868, John Vieregg and Hans Klingenberg set out with their rifles and an ax and crossed the ice-covered Loup River in order to secure these young oak trees, while the boys, with loaded double barreled shotguns, remained at the camping place in order to protect the horses and hunting equipment.

A very sharp northwest wind swept over the ice of the Loup River at the time.

After Vieregg and Klingenberg had walked for some distance on the ice, Klingenberg thought he noticed a bullet strike the snow near his feet. Klingenberg told Vieregg about this, but it was given no further attention. Klingenberg thought he saw another bullet strike without paying any attention to the matter. This time it was not during the dark of the night, not the rustle of high prairie grass in the flicker of a blazing campfire; no, it was whistling bullets that spoke a very clear language. The men carried out their purpose undisturbed and returned with the young oak trees. Here, however, they beheld a terrible spectacle. Both boys lay shot down in a large pool of blood; young Tramm was shot through the temple, while Gottsche was shot through the breast from the side. The horses, wool blankets, buffalo robes and double barreled guns had disappeared and in the sand was the only sure indication that it had been Indians

who had committed this crime--the footprints of Indians. Whether Sioux or Pawnee has never been ascertained.<sup>2</sup>

Vieregg and Klingenberg had to go back to the settlement on foot; a number of men then went out with horses and brought home the bodies of the murdered boys and the wagon.

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<sup>2</sup> E. F. Roeser writes "the boys were . . . supposed to have been murdered by Indians. This was somewhat doubted at the time and has been substantially proven otherwise."—Letters of E. F. Roeser to the Editor, October 7, 1937.

## Chapter X

### THE PAWNEE

Dealings with Pawnee Indians. Diverse interesting incidents that happened in the course of the years. Lucullian pleasures, which only Indians know how to appreciate fully. Numerical designations in the Pawnee language, as well as names for a number of objects and things in the Pawnee language, pronounced as accurately as possible in German.

As long as the Pawnee Indians remained in Nebraska, our intercourse with them was friendly throughout, although incidents occurred now and then in which murder was committed, which unquestionably were traceable to Pawnee. In this respect, the Pawnee were neither worse nor better than the palefaces. My many years dealings with them qualify me to give a fairly accurate estimate of them. There were good as well as bad Indians, just as there are good and bad people among the whites. For many years during the winters the Pawnee put up their wigwams on Wood River close to our settlement. In those days they still had beautiful tents, most of them made of tanned skins of buffalo and elk which had been shot in the summer or early fall.

Buffalo hides secured by the Indians during the months of October, November, December, January and even February, were prepared as buffalo robes and were in great demand by all the settlers. In this manner an active trade developed between us, the settlers, and our red friends, the Pawnee. We bought their buffalo robes and gave corn, wheat flour and other articles in exchange. These buffalo robes, which were often of excellent quality, were valued at \$2.50 to \$3 each, though they occasionally brought \$5 in trade for flour and similar things. The Indian women always took care of the tanning.

While these Pawnee were camping in our immediate neighborhood, they carried on their dances every evening when the

weather permitted, and our little children, eight or ten or twelve years of age, would visit their camp, sitting in rows with the Indians and watching the fun. Frequently these Indian friends became ill and would call on me for help. My universal remedy was almost always the same--*Bittersalz* (Epsom Salts)--and I recall no instance where it had not helped. As a result, I soon became quite famous as a doctor and once, when the smallpox broke out in Genoa on the Loup and I had successfully vaccinated a large number of white settlers as well as our friendly Indians, I was acknowledged as a great "Scheikstocker--Medicine Man", by the Pawnee.

During one winter a Pawnee family, a man with his wife and children, and a grown girl, who, however, was not a member of the immediate family, camped in the vicinity of our home and tanned my wolf hides, of which I had a large number. Our children often spent hours in the tents of the Indians. One day the children came home on the run, greatly excited about something they had seen at the Indians.

They cried, "The Indians have the newly born little hunting dogs that we killed in a cook pot over the fire."

This induced me to go over also, to observe the cooking art of our brown friends; and there I saw a large iron kettle three-fourths full of water and beans, bubbling merrily, with several small hunting dogs tossed back and forth by the boiling water and together with the beans moving up and down in the kettle--now the small feet, then the tails, and again the small heads would appear on the surface. So the cooking went on until the hair and hide separated from the bodies of the animals and came swimming to the surface. Finally, when the squaw seemed to think the soup was done, she removed a part of the hair still remaining by running her fingers lightly over the body of each dog. Then this Lucullian meal was consumed with evident relish by the entire family.

At another time on a Loup River hunting trip I learned from the Indians how to roast "a rib-piece" from a fat young deer. Placing it on a pointed stick and roasting it over the fire of coals, turning it frequently, and sprinkling salt on the meat as it is roasted, makes the most tasty wild game delicacy I have ever eaten. But the animal from which the roasting meat is taken



must be fat and well nourished. Whenever the opportunity has presented itself of enjoying such a feast I have never passed it up. However, it is well known that tastes vary a great deal and argument will not settle that.

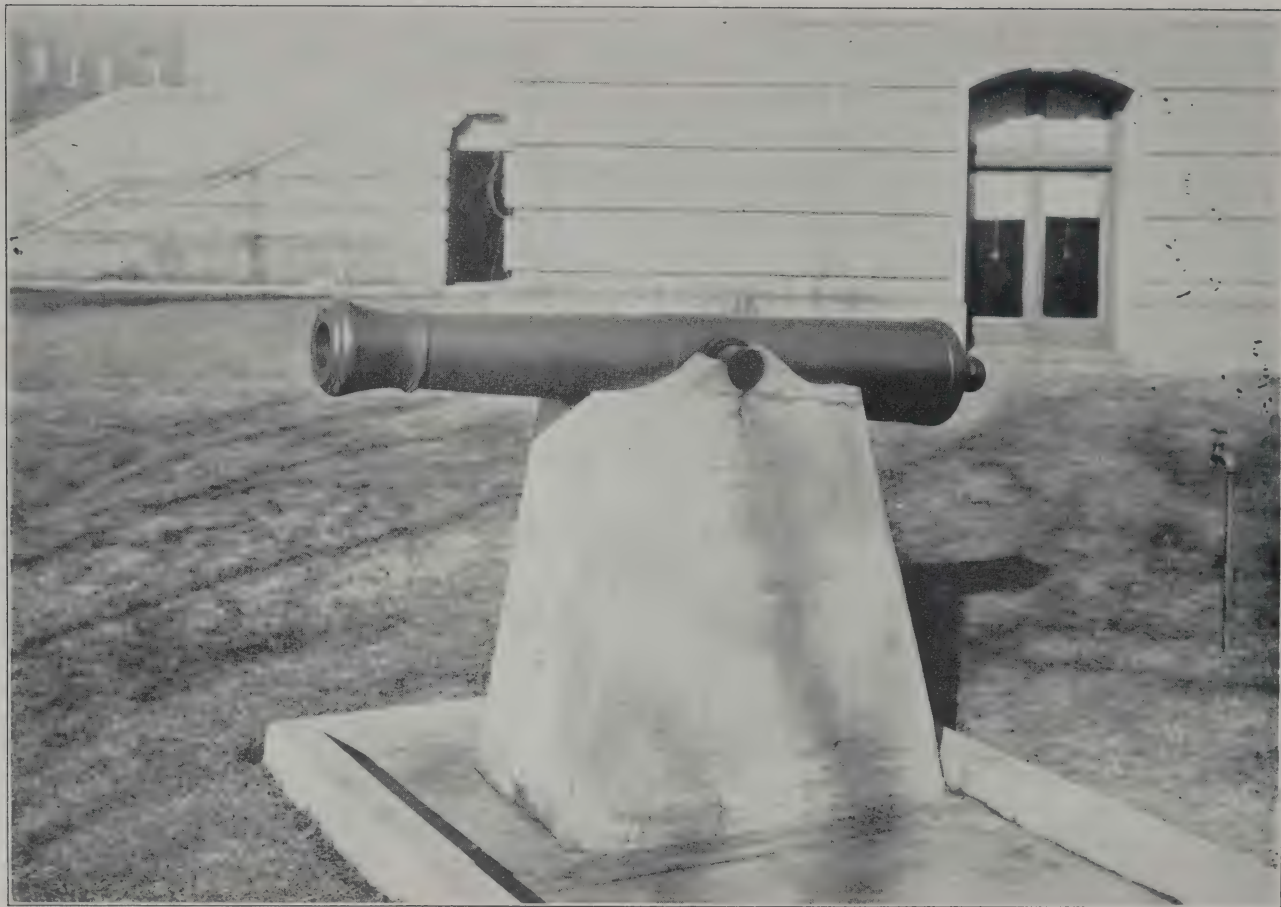
One day in the month of June when no Pawnee Indians remained near our settlement there appeared on our farm an Indian girl about eighteen years old. Without saying a word she proceeded to go upstairs and beckoned me to follow her. She was apparently acquainted with the location of rooms in our house, having been there before to buy flour. I and my wife were greatly astonished over the Indian maiden's intentions. When I reached her, she threw back her wool blanket and showed me a large tumor-like growth on her abdomen and said that I should take a knife and cut it off. This was the result of being recognized as a "physician" by the Pawnee. The appearance of this horrible growth almost made me faint, but I remained on my feet and called my wife, who came immediately. She, too, was frightened. The girl told us that she had been dragged and trampled by a horse and that this growth was the result of that accident; her tribe had driven her from their reservation near Genoa, threatening to kill her with a tomahawk because she was possessed with the evil spirit. We considered what might be done.

At that time we had two doctors in Grand Island, Dr. Bruhns and Dr. Kelly. My wife was willing to care for the girl, if these doctors would perform the operation. I at once drove to town and soon won over both doctors. They agreed to perform the necessary operation. I furnished the medicine needed and promised, if necessary, to get the doctors with my vehicle and also take them back to town again. The long and short of it was that the operation was performed and in three weeks the maiden returned to her tribe cured.

At another time, in the winter, during a three-day snow-storm two Pawnee came to our home late in the evening and asked if they could remain over night, and what was still worse, one of them was quite sick and wished to be cured by the pale-face medicine man. He naturally received a heavy dose of epsom salts which quickly and satisfactorily brought results. The next day they went on. This incident, however, was to have a sequel.

At this time, as we were exposed to the attacks of hostile Indians, I had long since given up my almost weekly antelope hunts. The usual fresh antelope was missing from our table. We had not heard nor seen anything of Indians for a long time, so I again began to make the hunting trips which were so dear to me. At first, of course, I remained close to the settlement and hardly ventured as far as Prairie Creek. Sometimes I shot an antelope and sometimes I returned home without any game, for the best hunting ground was on the north side of Prairie Creek and between this and the Loup River.

Becoming careless through the continuing absence of rumors of hostile Indians, and driven by my unbridled hunting fever, I pressed forward in old accustomed manner, not only across Prairie Creek, but far into the hills. I was lured further and further by antelope which I sighted in the distance, until I finally reached the high hills, near the Loup River bottom. I found myself in a so-called "sink," that is, a depression in the ground, surrounded by hills. This vale was, in my estimation, about 300 paces in diameter. I was pretty well in the middle of this basin, when I noticed, on the right hand side toward the Loup, a black object on the hill top. I recognized very quickly that it was an Indian; and he was immediately followed by two more mounted Indians. The Indians had their eyes on the Loup Valley, and had not noticed me. Quickly looking around I saw, to the left, three other Indians riding on the ridge of the hill, and apparently they had not yet noticed me either. I'll admit that a feeling of alarm came over me, but only for a moment. Then I had already made up my mind and said to myself that, above all, cool and careful action was imperative. As far as my weapons were concerned, I was far superior to the Indians. I had a very good Spencer carbine, with seven cartridges in it. Each cartridge was good for one Indian at 150 paces, and my cartridge belt was filled with cartridges. Besides this I had my eight-inch navy revolver, the handling of which I understood very well, and I also had a good horse under me. Actually there was no reason to be afraid--unless the hills were full of the red devils. I had loosened my revolver and was standing in the stirrup with the Spencer ready to fire when the Indians caught sight of me.



The six pound cannon supplied by Maj-Gen. S. R. Curtis for the defense of the settlement in 1865 and finally given to Hall County by the War Department in 1897.





Now they began to signal with their arms, while I watched what they were up to, always fearing that more heads would come over the ridge of hills. After a few moments it was evident that the Indians had come to an understanding. One of them handed his bow to another and raising both hands high in the air, clapped together, rode swiftly toward me, while I, ready to shoot, allowed him to ride up to me. When the Indian had approached within twenty paces of me he let out a friendly shout and at the same time I also recognized him. It was one of the two Indians who had stopped with us during the snowstorm the previous winter, the one into whom I had poured the dose of epsom salts. At a sign and a clear call from my friend, the other five also came galloping over and we had a sixfold "Haw, Haw, Haw." This was one moment in my life I would never forget. Now I was among friends whom I could trust implicitly. Never in my whole life have I felt more "brotherly" than in the short time I spent with these redskins in the hills bordering the Loup Valley. They told me that they had been sent from Genoa (Indian reservation) to find out if there were any Sioux Indians or their allies in the Loup River Valley. After the *Scheik-stocker* (medicine man) had shaken hands with each redskin, I rode toward home, but after all, shooting an antelope on the way. But for a long time after this I was more cautious when on an antelope hunt.

Among the Pawnee Indians I had two friends, with whom I had the most dealings. "Ne-sarre-sarr-ricks" was the name of one, and "Le-lu-la-scharr" the other. The first was a man not quite forty years old. Tall, well-built, extremely intelligent, his face could have been described as handsome. I have never seen an Indian who presented a more noble soul than Ne-sarre-sarr-ricks. He expected to be chief of the Pawnee, after their present chief, whom we called Don Pedro, was called by death; but he never became chief of the Pawnee because, even before the Pawnee were led away to the Indian Territory, he was physically broken and his health ruined by sickness. Le-lu-la-scharr was a corporal in the Pawnee Scouts under the command of Captain Arnoldt,<sup>1</sup> and was very proud of this distinction.

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold. See Note 5, Chapter VII.

Le-lu-la-scharr was shorter, of squarer build, strong and athletic, and a good distance runner.<sup>2</sup> His round rather than long face indicated good nature, in spite of deep scars left by small pox. These two visited me often. I discussed things at great length with Na-sarre-sarr-ricks and we soon learned to understand each other well. The sign language played an important part, for the Indians use this method of communication a great deal between themselves. By the instrumentality of the last named, and with his help, I prepared a sort of dictionary for myself which I give below. The words which I give in "separated" syllables are to be pronounced as one word, as for example, the name "Nesarresarricks" is pronounced as last written.

### Vocabulary

Pronunciation of numerals in the Pawnee language.

<i>English</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Pawnee</i>
one	eins	ask
two	zwei	bitk
three	drei	duit
four	vier	seidix
five	funf	sihuks
six	sechs	skiks habits
seven	sieben	bittken sixhabits
eight	acht	tauwix habits
nine	neun	nihuxsi-niweha
ten	zehn	nihux-sid
eleven	elf	ask-kaku gitts
twelve	zwolf	bit-ka-su-sidd
thirteen	dreizehn	tau-widi-hux-sid
fourteen	vierzehn	na-gu-gid
fifteen	funfzehn	sie-hux-taru-gitts
sixteen	sechszehn	si-da-wi
seventeen	siebenzehn	tau-witt-ka-ki
eighteen	achtzehn	bitt-kuff-ka-ki

<sup>2</sup> This was probably Koo-tah-we-coots-oo-lel-e-hoo-La-Shar, Big Hawk Chief, According to Captain Luther North, he

"was the fastest runner in the tribe and I believe in the world. . . While at Sidney after coming down from the Dull Knife expedition, another man and I timed him, both with stop watches. He ran the first half in 2 minutes flat and the second in 1:58, or the mile in 3:58. . . ."—Bruce *op. cit.* 35.

<i>English</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Pawnee</i>
nineteen	neunzehn	asku-ka-ki
twenty	zwanzig	bit-dau
thirty	dreizig	ei-hux-sini-wi-dau
forty	vierzig	bid-ku-su-nard
fifty	funfzig	bid-ku-su-nard-ni-huxsi
sixty	sechszig	tau-wi-nard
seventy	siebenzig	ski-dix-tard
eighty	achtzig	si-hux-tard
ninety	neunzig	skiks-subits-tard
hundred	hundert	ask-ku-six-subtard
thousand	tausend	ni-hux-sidi-nard

## Words translated into the Pawnee language

sun	Sonne	sukud
moon	Mond	baa
stars	Sterne	ubirid
summer	Sommer	niadd
winter	Winter	bidsickt
Platte River	Plattefluss	Gitsgatus
Loup River	Loupfluss	Gitsgatann
North Loup River	Nord-Loupfluss	Givit ucatuk
Middle Loup River	Mittel-Loupfluss	Its-karri
South Loup River	Sud-Loupfluss	Gits
Blue River	Blaufluss	Auid dickski
Republican River	Republican Fluss	Kirn-ruda
buffalo	Buffel	daraha
deer	Hirsch	darurack
antelope buck	Antilopenbock	alligatus
antelope doe	Antilopenschaaf	es kaa
antelope fawn	Antilopenlamm	allike
buffalo bull	Buffelbulle	kiwik
buffalo cow	Buffelkuh	daraha squah
grass	Gras	gadard
tree	Baum	laks
forest	Wald	dikald
horse	Pferd	arrus
stallion	Hengst	bigatus
mare	Stute	accesabadd
colt	Fohlen	assahard
mule	Maulesel	kaka-kitts
cat	Katze	puss
prairie dog	Prairiehund	skiskala
raccoon	Waschbar	isadd

*English*

bear  
 white bear  
 panther  
 skunk  
 fish  
 bat  
 monkey  
 eagle  
 owl  
 caterpillar  
 woodpecker  
 crow  
 kite  
 magpie  
 egg  
 blackbird  
 chicken  
 gobbler  
 crane  
 hog  
 ducks  
 traps  
 bread  
 knife  
 lynx  
 earth  
 snow  
 rain  
 wind  
 thunder  
 lightning  
 fire  
 cloud  
 steam  
 night  
 day  
 I  
 you  
 go home  
 come here  
 lie down  
 sit down  
 stand still  
 very little

*German*

Bar  
 Weisser bar  
 Panther  
 Stinkkatze  
 Fisch  
 Fledermaus  
 Affe  
 Adler  
 Eule  
 Raupe  
 Specht  
 Krahe  
 Weihe  
 Elster  
 Ei  
 Blackbird  
 Huhn  
 Truthan  
 Kranich  
 Schwein  
 Enten  
 Fallen  
 Brod  
 Messer  
 Luchs  
 Erde  
 Schnee  
 Regen  
 Wind  
 Donner  
 Blitz  
 Feuer  
 Wolke  
 Dampf  
 Nacht  
 Tag  
 ich  
 du  
 gehe nach hause  
 komme her  
 lege dich nieder  
 setze dich  
 stehe stille  
 sehr wenig

*Pawnee*

koroks  
 korokstoker  
 bukstitkukits  
 nivid  
 gattsik  
 bast  
 zuhiks  
 arikt  
 bahud  
 daakats  
 kagett  
 kaak  
 atsaha  
 kauakk  
 ebek  
 kast  
 igats-kirikokk  
 giktu-carid  
 gadurd  
 gadurad  
 kiwaks  
 assauju  
 ikatah  
 nezik  
 backsits-kaddivit  
 urard  
 dusah  
 dasua  
 dihudh  
 di kiddid  
 dibababit  
 korid  
 ditskakatusa  
 nauwhissu  
 iduss  
 maddahas  
 nath  
 nash  
 wissgutts  
 suits  
 widosusur  
 sukspid  
 sukuradd  
 kidibattsk



<i>English</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Pawnee</i>
tomorrow	morgen	nahosah
parents	Vater, Mutter	gudadinah
children	Kinder	gudasinah
very good	sehr gut	durahi
revolver	Revolver	nahad-tani-hari
rifle	Buchse	diraguts
sergeant (officer)	Sergeant (offizier)	na-dira-suri-wack
chewing tobacco	Kautabak	nausgard
smoking tobacco	Rauchtabak	nausgaris-sakits
pipe	Pfeife	nabatiss
year	Jahr	ni-gatte-kau
corn	Korn	nikkis
large	gross	didi-hu
small	klein	kidabitts
potatoes	Kartoffeln	its
house	Haus	ackgard
door	Thur	negagus
window	Fenster	uka-alau-wasick
stove	Ofen	gurit-kuku
to smoke	rauchen	natuniska
shirt	Hemd	nagassi
moccasins (leather shoe)	Moccasins	assud
wheat	Weizen	luck-tau-wi-dus
welch corn	Welschkorn	nick-gis
oats	Hafer	nick-gis-hidd
wheelbarrow	Schiebkarren	ara-ga-dux
morning	Morgen	ka-ka-dus
noon	Mittag	wa-dis-suk-kog-idard
evening	Abend	wa-dirret-kar
to eat	essen	nucksau-saka-watts
to drink	trinken	suk-skik
to wash	waschen	nass-widi-suksits-kasud
to dry	abtrocknen	suksti-terswah-hadd
to comb	kämmen	widi-suruk-skahud
to rub	reiben	suck-kata-birid
to push	schieben	sucks-gattau-wida
very strong	sehr stark	sucks-gassis-baa
to pull	ziehen	suttsik-sau-witt-sick
to carry	tragen	gus-didari-sawatt-gada

<i>English</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Pawnee</i>
fog	Nebel	dibahu
to swim	schwimmen	gus-dihud-sadiat
to swim over this way	heruberschwimmen	six-sudsa-nid
to swim over that way	hinuberschwimmen	six-sud-nuann
to fly	fliegen	nu-gaddad
to go	gehen	gus-dihud-gadded
to shoot	schien	wa-suksta-kaff
you shoot	du schiesst	nath-suksta-kaff
I have killed it	ich habe es getodtet	wadas-kud
lost	verloren	kuga-du-darik
give me	gieb mir	sickstah
I give you	ich gebe dir	dacki
I am going home	Ich gehe morgen	nat-kaka-dus-kastied
tomorrow	Heim	
You are going home	Du gehst morgen	nas-kaka-des-kasied
tomorrow	Heim	
They are going home	Sie gehen morgen	kaka-disgo-so-dako <sup>3</sup>
tomorrow	Heim	

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<sup>3</sup> The Pawnee portion of the vocabulary, as given here, represents an approximation of the words as William Stolley reproduced them phonetically in German.

## Chapter XI.

### FORT KEARNY AND THE SETTLERS

Wretched hardships in connection with the delivery of our corn to Fort Kearny. Decline of our market after Colonel May left Fort Kearny. Corruption in Fort Kearny and the way in which Captain Johnson, the commandant, attempted in partnership with John Heath, the sutler, to give the supply of corn secretly to a known rebel, and the way this plot was brought to naught.

It is true we received good prices for all our products at Fort Kearny as long as Colonel May was in command there, but the long trip often involved lots of trouble and work, and even danger. We had to cross the Platte River with our corn and it was not unusual to unload and reload our corn two or three times when the quicksand was too bad. Sometimes, on account of the quicksand it was so dangerous that we could not risk the attempt until the commander had ordered out a squadron of cavalry, four horses abreast, to cross the river several times. This settled the quicksand and a wagon crossing was possible. With the withdrawal of troops to the south, our market was very depressed. While Colonel May was a man of honor, a friend of the settlers, Captain Johnson<sup>1</sup> proved to be hostile and dishonest. In awarding the contracts for the delivery of corn, he gave the contract to the sutler, John Heath,<sup>2</sup> for \$1.35 a bushel, though my bid for our

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<sup>1</sup> Probably Capt. John A. Thompson instead of Johnson. See note 3, Chapter VII:

<sup>2</sup> Stolley regularly inserted an a in spelling Heth's name. John Heth was a brother of Captain Harry Heth, later a Confederate major-general. John Heth was dismissed as Fort Kearny's sutler early in the war because of Southern sympathies. He remained in Nebraska, however, later going into business in Nebraska City. Sydenham Account. Nebr. State Hist. Soc. *Publications*, XXI, 290.

settlers was only 1.18 a bushel.<sup>3</sup> This was the same Captain Johnson who set free seventeen captured Sioux and declared that he would rather see twenty farmers killed than one Indian. John Heath, the sutler at Fort Kearny, was a Southern sympathizer and we had proof, that he had shipped whole boxes full of army revolvers to the rebels in St. Joseph, which he took from the supply of arms in Fort Kearny. We settlers did not take this setback without protest. When Captain Johnson said "Mr. John Heath gets the contract," I stepped up to the table where the gentlemen were sitting and said, "Don't allow yourselves to believe that this matter is settled. I shall frustrate your designs."

There were present three of us from our settlement--besides myself there were James Vieregg and Christian Andresen. I wanted to telegraph at once from Fort Kearny to General Fremont at St. Louis. We inquired at the telegraph office and found we three together had just enough money to pay a ten-word telegram, but Captain Johnson soon knew what I was up to. When Andresen and I went across the parade grounds to the telegraph office to send the message, Captain Johnson called to me from the balcony of his house.

"Stolley, come here. I want to talk to you."

Thinking that he had changed his mind, I proceeded up the steps toward him. Andresen remained below at the foot of the stairs. When I reached the top of the steps, Captain Johnson came toward me; but his eyes betrayed him and I ducked quickly as

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<sup>3</sup> Captain Thompson defends his award to Heth by charging Stolley with attempted bribery in a letter dated September 6, 1861. He charges: "that he, William Stolley, would upon my awarding the contract to himself and James Vieregg (one of the bidders) give me \$1,000 that if Vieregg got the 5,000 bushels he proposed to furnish, he should after the balance of the contractors having left the Q. Masters Office, fail to enter into bonds, so that the contracts could be awarded to Mr. W. Stolley."

Captain Thompson goes on to state that H. B. Clarks was the lowest bidder, but refused to take the contract, and he then gave it to Heth, "the most responsible principal." He asks for approval of this letting to Heth, "already at work engaging and delivering corn. . ."

In a telegram dated September 23, Thompson states that the Heth contract calls for 10,000 bushels of corn at \$1.36 and 14,000 bushels of oats at \$1.20. Day Book, Fort Kearny, 1858-1862.

Discrepancies in dates of Thompson's record and the fact that the pages of the original Day Book between November 23, 1861 and June 18, 1862 were cut out makes it seem probable that there were irregularities in handling supplies at Fort Kearny. *Ed.*



he came at me with a terrific blow. In an instant I had my trusty navy revolver in my hand. Jamming it against the scoundrel, I said, "Back, or I'll shoot!"

Captain Johnson jumped back and I went down the steps revolver in hand, watching Captain Johnson as long as I could see him. We went directly to our carriage and left Fort Kearny at once, without sending our telegram to General Fremont.

However, this was sent as soon as possible from Columbus. At that time our settlement had no telegraphic connection with the rest of the world. I sent a special messenger on horseback with it to Columbus.

I was commissioned by the settlers to go personally to the headquarters of General Fremont at St. Louis and file our complaint. To reach St. Louis in those days we had to travel by stage from our settlement to Omaha and from there by Missouri River steamer to St. Louis. I took sworn affidavits unquestionably showing the guilt of both Captain Johnson and John Heath. When I arrived in Omaha I consulted our Governor Saunders and U.S. Marshall Hitchcock. Having examined my documents, they urged me to give up my trip to St. Louis and promised me to take up the matter themselves and to imprison Captain Johnson as well as John Heath.<sup>4</sup> These two gentlemen set out immediately in their carriage, taking along law books and handcuffs. I remained two more days in Omaha, from where I sent a complete report of the incident to General Fremont in St. Louis. As mentioned, I had previously sent a telegraphic dispatch from Columbus to General Fremont not to affirm the corn contract given to Heath by Captain Johnson, because it was a swindle, and that Heath was a rebel

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<sup>4</sup> It would not be at all surprising that the new Republican territorial officials should act against the federal officers at Fort Kearny. There had already been considerable protest (from Republican territorial elements) at the letting of contracts for Fort Kearny supplies.

"... an enterprising company of German farmers living at Grand Island city, offered to deliver (12,000 bushels of corn) at the Fort for \$1.50 per bushel. Did they get the contract, do you suppose? Not at all. They were settlers of Nebraska, guilty of the unpardonable offense of preferring freedom to slavery... the contract was subsequently given to pro-slavery men in Missouri, at a cost of \$3.50 per bushel! By this single transaction, the government was plundered of nearly \$25,000!"

*The Nebraska Republican*, August 22, 1860

and proofs would be brought later. Then I followed the Governor and U.S. Marshall back to the settlement by stage.

On the day following my return home, Governor Saunders and U.S. Marshall Hitchcock returned from Fort Kearny, and called on me at my farm.

They did not have much encouragement to offer me. For at Fort Kearny they were sarcastically informed by Captain Johnson that no territorial governor or U. S. Marshall could arrest him, for as an officer of the army he was answerable only to his superiors and not to them. John Heath, the sutler, they could indeed have arrested. However, he was clever enough to bring security to his valuable person. He fled to the Sioux on the Republican River until the trouble blew over. In the meantime the dispatch and documents I sent to General Fremont had their effect. Captain Johnson was peremptorily ordered to come to St. Louis at once to answer at headquarters the charges made against him. Meanwhile General Fremont was relieved by General Thomas so that Captain Johnson succeeded in perjuring himself out of the "mess," and returned to Fort Kearny and was again commandant there.

I was not allowed to show myself at Fort Kearny for six months as Captain Johnson had sworn that he would shoot me down at the first opportunity. Of course it has always been a question which one of us would have shot the quicker and better.

This Captain Johnson and his men (who hated him) were later ordered to Texas and there in front of others he was *shot by one of his own men*. The corn contract, however, was nullified.

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<sup>5</sup> Major John A. Thompson was murdered by desperadoes at Fort Mason, Texas, November 14, 1867. *Official Army Register* 1868, 137.

## Chapter XII

### TIMBER TROUBLES

The first planting of trees in the settlement. Devastation of forests by irresponsible contractors of the Union Pacific Railroad Company and the way in which the latter sent "Henry Rifles" to the contractors, in order to use force in case of necessity in robbing the settlers of their stock of trees.

In the spring of 1860 I planted my first six thousand young trees consisting of cottonwood, black locust, ash and black walnut which had been gathered near Omaha. This planting can be found on the west half of the northwest quarter of Section 28 and on the east half of the northeast quarter of Section 29 in Township 11 North of Range 9 West, which 160 acres comprises the first piece of land in Hall County to be bought from the government in 1866 and was the first recording on the (until that time) white plat in the U. S. Land Office in Omaha. Jacob Wittig, then my nearest neighbor (now midway 1907) was the second entry.

With the building of the Union Pacific Railroad, which reached our settlement in the summer of 1866, conditions changed radically, not only in our settlement but in the whole Platte Valley. Lands west of Columbus were being surveyed at the same time, but the survey of woodlands on the Wood and the Platte Rivers—all of these which were close to our settlement were claimed by our settlers under squatter rights—was omitted. A band of lawless and disorderly people that was let loose by the railroad company, promptly cut down all trees big enough to furnish ties for the railroad. The rights that the settlers had to these timberlands, according to territorial law, was disregarded by these hordes. Wherever trees stood, they were taken by these railroad bandits.

I myself had no woodland, as my 160 acres consisted of prairie land, so I had no personal reason to mix into these affairs.

However, it was almost unbearable for me to have to watch this terrible, unjust devastation of the natural forests, especially since many of our settlers really had perfectly legal titles to their timber claims. One of my nearest neighbors on Wood River, Friedrich Moeller, had about one hundred acres of fine timber which was chopped down before his eyes while he stood helplessly by and allowed it to be done. I did my best to arouse those directly interested into offering resistance. Only Carl Miller, a farmer near the confluence of Wood River with the north channel of the Platte River, had the courage. Mounted and armed with a navy Colt revolver and double-barreled shotgun he drove the timber robbers from his wooded claim. As soon as they began to cut down his trees, he went to them and told them briefly and to the point that they must stop at once or he would shoot. Then he went, armed himself and came riding back again, firing merrily at the timber robbers, who now sought safety by running head over heels. Carl Miller remained unmolested after that and thus saved his woodland.

This single manly protest on the part of C. Miller, however, immediately resulted in the Union Pacific Railroad Company furnishing their people with two boxes of Henry rifles and ammunition from Seward County through a certain Mr. Cox. The weapons were distributed to the wood choppers by William H. Platt, the clerk of one of the Railroad Company contractors with the very striking remark: "Now, shoot the God damn black Dutchmen!"

Of course, at the time these rifles of which each magazine held eighteen cartridges, were distributed, the natural timber near our settlement was virtually all destroyed. This work of destruction was complete and young trees had to start to grow all over again. Since that time, however, the older settlers as well as those coming later have generally started groves, so that the once naked prairie now presents beautiful homesteads, surrounded by trees and woods in all directions.

With the arrival of the railroad the good old times disappeared forever. Life close to nature as we had lived it up to that time took on a new form. Of the animals that enlivened this region at the founding of our settlement, few, very few, remain and of these few, the skunk has the most important place. I shot





The William Stolley home in 1893. The buildings left to right are: barn, built of logs from Fort Independence; large barn, built in 1889; old log house home, covered with siding; the Hann house, and school house, built in 1869-70, the first public school building in Hall County.



my last buffalo in Hall County on the day when President Lincoln was assassinated in April, 1865. This happened on Prairie Creek. Thereafter a few buffalo were shot on the south side of the Platte River. So far as I have been able to ascertain, Geo. C. Humphrey and Wesley Dempster each shot a buffalo in June, 1874. I have never known that the shooting of a buffalo was considered a great honor. On the contrary, the buffalo hunt in itself is no more interesting to a real hunter, and requires no more courage or skill than shooting down a Texas steer. With deer and especially antelope it is a different story. This sort of hunting demands a skill not needed in buffalo hunting if you know his nature. The buffalo, elk, deer and antelope are probably not to be found wild in Nebraska today (1907). The so-called prairie wolf of course is still present in large numbers, but the large gray wolf disappeared from the scene along with the buffalo. He really belongs with the buffalo and elk.

Red and gray foxes, badgers, wild cats and lynx, which were often seen in pioneer times, are very rare, if found at all. Jack rabbits and cottontails are really more numerous than in the beginning of our settlement, since the wolves and foxes--their worst enemies--have been almost entirely exterminated. Especially in the case of wild fowl has so-called "civilized society," which crowded out the Indians, demonstrated that it must have descended from vandals. They kill, destroy and shoot at them until there is nothing left to shoot.

All rivers and creeks were alive with beaver, otter, mink, muskrats and racoons, along with various kinds of geese, ducks, pelicans, swans, and other water birds. These birds of passage appeared by the thousands every spring and fall. Cranes, gray and white, and several species of woodcocks were seen in large flocks. All this has changed entirely in the fifty years that have passed since the founding of our settlement. The above mentioned birds and animals whose great multitudes gave the land its peculiar character and appeal in those early days have decreased in numbers to almost the vanishing point.

On the other hand, it must be affirmed that the world of song and other small birds has increased enormously, probably

due to the plantings of woods and shrubs which offer them a better opportunity for building nests.

Prairie chickens and quail also are more numerous than they were in the early years. They multiplied very rapidly, as wolves and foxes were greatly decimated in a few years by poisoning. Later, when the railroad reached us, the flocks of prairie chickens (grouse) and quail were cleaned up in a few years so that game laws were necessary to prevent their complete extermination. Now these birds, so useful to the farmer, are again increasing rapidly in numbers.

That is a question which arises involuntarily in my mind. If things go on in as senseless a manner as in the past then of the wild fowl, probably only the European sparrows will remain. I imported these birds from New York early in May, 1876, in the hope of using them to combat migratory grasshoppers. For twenty-four years since I set free five pair of these sparrows on our farm, they have proven themselves worthy representatives of their tribe, and seem to be ever mindful of the command of their Creator, "be fruitful and multiply."

When fifty more years have passed into oblivion and all wild fowl can only be seen as mounted specimens in museums, I hope that the hotels and restaurants in Grand Island will still serve delicious sparrow pie at a reasonable price. And now from the sparrow I come logically to a grasshopper plague which in future it is supposed to help eliminate.



## Chapter XIII

### GRASSHOPPERS AND RELIEF

The grasshopper plague. The menace of famine during the years 1873-1875. Disciplinary measures used to alleviate the prevailing emergency.

The migratory grasshopper (Rocky Mountain locust) "*Caloptenus spretus*" was first noticed in Hall County in August, 1862, not appearing in great numbers at that time nor doing much damage. In 1863 we did not see them, but they came again on August 1, 1864, again only in small swarms. However, on July 15, 1865, they appeared again and this time they ate up all the buckwheat in the county, without doing any damage to the other grain or corn fields. On July 8, 1866, and again in August, 1868, they appeared and although they came in much larger swarms than previously they caused no damage of any importance. As early as 1869 these insects destroyed almost the entire harvest in Hall County. In 1873 the grasshoppers appeared in large swarms as early as May 22. Coming with a southwest wind, they did not trouble us much and spared us that summer. On July 20, 21 and 22, 1874 and on August 5 and 6 of this same year the grasshoppers appeared in heavy clouds that temporarily obscured the sun. This time almost the entire crop was destroyed by these voracious insects. As a result great need prevailed the following winter and spring of 1875, not only in Hall County but also in a good many other counties in Nebraska and in parts of Iowa and Kansas, which were stricken by this disaster.

To assist those who were not able to help themselves the State Grange appointed a relief committee, and an aid society, The State Aid Society, was also organized in Omaha

The Grange at that time was a powerful alliance and was strong in all the states of the Union. We had organized so-called subordinate granges in every county in Nebraska. As a result,

relief money and plenty of other donations for the needy and suffering in Nebraska poured in, especially from eastern states. The number who were destitute was so large, however, that plentiful as private donations were, they were not sufficient and the legislature of Nebraska voted \$50,000 for aid to the needy.<sup>1</sup> Even this was not enough, and the relief committees of the State Grange and the State Aid Society agreed to ask the Congress of the United States to appropriate a sufficient sum for this purpose. General Ord, head of the military department of the west,<sup>2</sup> with headquarters in Omaha, was chairman of the State Aid Society, while I was chairman of the State Grange Relief Committee. Upon General Ord's suggestion I was authorized to go to Washington in person and bring our request before Congress. I reluctantly agreed, because I feared that I would not succeed in carrying out the task assigned me. But after I had been pressed into the service, I put forth all my energy to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

The Nebraska district which had been devastated by grasshoppers extended from Omaha west to beyond North Platte and from South Dakota to Kansas. Since I was acting master of the State Grange, I urged that subsidiary organizations in all stricken counties send in a correct statistical report regarding the number of Grange members who needed help. I received these reports within a week and they served as a basis for my estimates which showed that about half of those needing assistance were Grangers.

In the meantime I tried to secure from the Union Pacific Railroad free transportation for all the goods that had been sent to us in great quantities from eastern states by freight. Mr. S. H. H. Clark, at that time freight manager of this railroad, had often told me that he would give us two-fifths of the freight costs, but we must pay three-fifths. Since Jay Gould was at the time, in a manner of speaking, the owner of the Union Pacific Railroad, I planned to apply directly to him, as I had to go to

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<sup>1</sup> Proceeds of a \$50,000 bond issue were authorized to be used to purchase seed grain in stricken areas. *Laws of Nebr.*, 1875, 173-175.

<sup>2</sup> Brigadier-General E. O. C. Ord, Commander of the Dept. of the Platte.

Washington anyway.<sup>3</sup> This induced me to again call on Mr. S. H. H. Clark in his office in Omaha, to ask him for a letter of introduction to Mr. Jay Gould. I told Clark frankly what I wanted of Mr. Gould.

Mr. Clark laughed right in my face and said, "Stolley, you will not get free transportation from Mr. Gould. He will simply say, 'Go to Clark in Omaha; that is a matter that concerns only him.' However, you shall have a nice letter of recommendation and introduction," and I got it, too.

Armed with letters of recommendation to senators and representatives in Washington from General Ord and other people in Omaha, I finally started on my trip with a heavy heart. Almost everyone told me beforehand that all my efforts would be in vain and no one feared this more than I did myself.

I arrived in Washington early in January, 1875, and following the advice of General Ord, took quarters at the Ebbett House.<sup>4</sup> Restlessly I endeavored to look up all the senators and congressmen to whom I had letters of recommendation. Carl Schurz was at that time senator from Missouri and I also called on him, although I had no recommendation to him.

In a word, on the third day of my stay in Washington I was informed that at 10:00 a.m. I was to appear before James Garfield, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.<sup>5</sup> When I reached this point in my labors I began to hope for success for, wherever I called, I met with a friendly reception and everyone evidently was inclined to help the matter along.

P. W. Hitchcock was at that time senator and Lorenzo Crounse was our representative in the House.

The way and manner in which I was received by James Garfield (later the President who fell by an assassin's hand) was very much suited to lower my joyful hopes. He asked me to be seated opposite him and then began to stare at me without saying a word. This staring at me was so long drawn out by him that I felt it was an insult and soon resolved to pay the

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<sup>3</sup> Jay Gould was a member of the board of directors and dominated the policies of the U. P. Railroad, 1874-78. *Dictionary of American Biography* 7:454.

<sup>4</sup> Probably means late in January. See note 6, following.

<sup>5</sup> House Committee on Appropriations. *House Committee Reports 2d Session, 43d Congress.*

gentleman back in kind. I concentrated my gaze on one of my opponent's eyes and, without moving a lash, bored a sharp look into his eye. The effect of this was not long in coming and Mr. Garfield's eyes wavered past me for the first time. When he looked at me again he began to speak, and the following discussion took place:

Garfield: As I understand it, Mr. Stolley, you are here to try to secure from the Congress of the United States an allotment of money for the relief of needy people who have been stricken by grasshoppers.

I: Yes! Quite right.

Garfield: Will you please tell me how large this allotment should be in order to be sufficient?

I: Certainly. About \$500,000.

Garfield: (Sarcastically) So! Exactly a cool half million dollars? Mm--well--will you explain to me how you have reached the conclusion that \$500,000 is required to meet the needs in your state?

I: Certainly. I'm not so ignorant as to appear before you with our request for help for the needy, without being able to answer such questions.

With this, I handed Mr. Garfield my neatly prepared statistical memorandum. I gave him, in few words, an explanation as to how it had been possible for me to gather this material through our Grange organization.

Mr. Garfield began to study my statistics eagerly, using his lead pencil repeatedly to jot down computations. This went on for about half an hour without his asking me another question, and then he began to speak to me again. Looking at me in a very friendly manner he said, "You will not get a half million dollars from Congress. However, I shall recommend, after further examination of your statistical report, that Congress pass an appropriation of \$150,000. May I keep these statistics?"

I: Certainly. That is the reason I gathered all these facts.

Garfield: How long do you expect to stay here?

I: Not any longer than is absolutely necessary.

Garfield: Remain here until the whole thing is settled. I expect that this will soon be the case. Meanwhile, look around the city--you will find many things worth seeing," and my parting



with Mr. Garfield was as warm as my reception had been cold. With happy heart and full of hope, I left Mr. Garfield's committee room. My job was done and I could do nothing more at present but wait. Through the courtesy of our senator, Mr. P. W. Hitchcock, the doors of various government departments were open to me and I utilized my time to the best of my ability. I was also presented to General Grant, the President, by Senator Hitchcock and was allowed fifteen minutes audience with him at the White House.

On the eighth day of my stay in Washington everything was settled; the \$150,000 appropriation was passed by both houses of Congress and signed by the President.<sup>6</sup> I sent a dispatch immediately to our office in Lincoln, as well as to the State Aid Office in Omaha, announcing the result. Now according to my plans it remained for me to make a call on Mr. Jay Gould in New York City, and the next day I was on my way to that place.

At that time I had a brother in New York City who had lived there over twenty years and had established a very good business as a contractor. I went to him to secure a place to stay. My brother Friedrich was greatly astonished at my visit at this time of the year, because he knew that my health was not the very best at that time.

After telling him of my mission in Washington, and informing him of my intended visit to Jay Gould, he said, "So far, so

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<sup>6</sup> H. R. 4545 authorized the President to direct the distribution, by proper Army officers, of food and condemned Army clothing to grasshopper sufferers in the West. An appropriation of \$150,000 was included. The bill was introduced and passed in the House under suspension of the rules, February 1, 1875; passed the Senate, February 4; received final approval, February 10, 1875. *Journal of the House of Representatives 2d sess. 43d Congress*, 367, 391, 447; *Senate Journal, 2d sess. 43d Congress*, 204.—Passage of this act was thought necessary to legalize earlier issues of food and clothing, made without legal authority. *Senate Exec. Docs. 2d sess. 43d Congress No. 5*, House *Exec. Docs. 2d sess. 43d Congress, No. 143*.

In his February 6, 1875, letter to his wife, Stolley wrote, "I arrived in New York at a quarter past six day before yesterday morning. . . The Relief Bill (\$150,000) passed the House of Representatives on the third day after we arrived in Washington. Our work therefore has been crowned with the best of success. Gen. Ord has remained there, while I came here. . ." Stolley letter from New York, Febr. 6, 1875 State Historical Society Manuscript file.

good, very good. But, now let me tell you something. I will give you some good advice. You have been out there in the wilderness so many years that in some ways you have become rusticated. You probably do not know this yourself, but you talk too loud. You must not talk so loud when you talk to people like Jay Gould. People who talk as loudly as you, do not make a good impression."

"Maybe so," I said, "but have you anything else to say as to what is not right?"

"Yes," said my brother, "your clothes are too shabby. You should be better dressed."

"Anything else?" I asked.

"No," said my brother. "Nothing else."

"Now," said I, "listen to me. If I were to take note of my voice, whenever I have a matter to present, I would be lost. I speak from the heart, and what comes from the heart, usually reaches the heart. About my clothes I suppose you are right, and if you will give me your best overcoat, I shall accept it with thanks. It will cover my shabby suit. However, I would not like to give up that nice overcoat again, for, later, I will need it very badly in Chicago, where I'm hoping to obtain free transportation from three more railroad companies. I beg you to accompany me when I go to see Mr. Jay Gould in his office this afternoon. Then you will see and hear how I put things over."

And so it was done. I put on my brother's best overcoat and in the afternoon we went to the railroad magnate's office. This office was on Broadway and Fifth Avenue. Upon entering we found Mr. Jay Gould dictating alternately to three different telegraph operators. As we stepped in and waited near the entrance door he said, "Just a moment. I'll be through right away." He did not say, "Please have a seat." No, he allowed us to remain standing where we were.

However, we had not been standing there very long when Mr. Gould suddenly turned around in the middle of the room and said abruptly, "What do you want?"

I stepped up to him quickly and, as I wanted to give him a letter of introduction from S. H. H. Clark, Omaha manager of the Union Pacific Railroad, I said, "Here is a letter from Mr. Clark of Omaha."



The parade in the semi-centennial celebration in 1907 at Grand Island. The parade is interesting for its variety of vehicles and the Grand Island street scene of 1907. Background is the City Hall, built in 1882, which has since been replaced.





Here he interrupted me and said, "Aside from the letter, tell me what you want from me."

Retaining the letter in my hand for the time being, I stepped a little closer to him and said, "Very well, Mr. Gould. I come from Washington City where I obtained, within eight days, a Congressional appropriation of \$150,000 for needy Nebraska farmers who were stricken with the grasshopper plague. Now I am here, Mr. Gould, to beg you to give orders for free transportation for all relief goods which are being sent us 'en masse' from the east over your Union Pacific Railroad. Mr. Gould, I do not expect you will do this out of Christian love or charity. No. I am firmly convinced that you will do this because it is to your own interests. You possess millions of acres of land in the State of Nebraska. A large part of this land was sold to settlers who have made part payments but still owe by far the larger share. Now these are the very people who are hit hardest by grasshopper invasion. These people have virtually nothing left upon which they can live the coming year. Unless it is made possible for us to extend these people the needed assistance, so they can live there for another year and harvest their crops, they will soon be forced to abandon the State of Nebraska. They will all return to the eastern states and say, 'Nebraska is the damnedest land that the sun ever shone on'."

As I reached this point, Mr. Gould stepped up to me, laid his hand on my shoulder and said, "You shall have all the free transportation you want." Then he stepped to a table, took a card which bore the name "Jay Gould" on one side, and wrote on the other side: Mr. Sidney Dillon, No. 20 Nassau Street. Mr. Wm. Stolley shall have all the free transportation he is asking for.

As Mr. Gould handed me this card, he said, "Give this card to Mr. Dillon."

I thanked Mr. Gould briefly on behalf of the needy of our State and with that I had successfully completed my task.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Stolley wrote his wife of this incident, ". . . yesterday I went to work here (New York) also, accompanied by my brother Friedrich. Jay Gould, the 'Railroad King,' received me courteously and after a short conference I accomplished my purpose. He gave me a short note to Sidney Dillon. . . and I have gained much more than I had hoped for

When brother Friedrich and I were out on the street again, I said, "Well, did I speak too loud?"

"There is nothing more to say, but the overcoat you may keep," was his answer. Since then, however, I wear only a heavy, brown cloth overcoat with velvet collar in winter.

We went directly to the main office of the Union Pacific Railroad, 20 Nassau Street. That same evening I sent three dispatches, one to S. H. H. Clark, general freight manager of the Union Pacific Railroad, Omaha, Nebraska; the second to our office in Lincoln, Nebraska; and the third to General Ord, office of the State Aid Society, to the effect that henceforth all gifts would be sent over the Union Pacific Railroad without cost.

I remained in New York a week and then proceeded to Chicago. The other three railroad companies, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, the Chicago and Northwestern, and the Chicago and Rock Island, without many questions also granted my request for free transportation on all relief goods which should be sent to us from the east. Arriving in Omaha, I went at once to extend my greetings to Mr. S. H. H. Clark, general freight manager of the Union Pacific Railway.

Upon entering his office he laughed and said, "Well, you now have everything that you wanted, and everything is all right."

"Oh, no, Mr. Clark," I said, also laughing, "All is not yet as it should be. Mr. Gould promised me that I should have all the free transportation I wanted. This includes all the freight you delivered previously and for which we had to pay full freight rates. No doubt you will be glad to return the money that you have collected."

In a most friendly manner he agreed to do this, and later paid me \$866. All the other railroads also refunded the money which they had collected from us in like manner. I had more or less to do with this relief program for another whole year.

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in obtaining for the State two hundred carloads of 'boundlessly free' transportation over the U. P."

*Stolley letter*, Febr. 6, 1875, State Historical Society manuscript file. Sidney Dillon was president of the Union Pacific at that time. Poor, *Manual of the Railroads of the U. S.* 1874-75, 400.

We had on deposit in a Lincoln bank over \$20,000 which had been sent to us from all parts of the country. The relief committee, upon my advice, decided that this money should be prorated among all the sub-committees in the various counties for distribution. This was before my trip east. Upon my return to Lincoln, I found that our treasurer, Church Howe, without authority had used the greatest share of this money for the purchase of seeds of a very inferior quality. As a result, dissension arose within the Nebraska Grange organization which finally led to its complete dissolution in Nebraska.

This Church Howe was a wide awake politician, who looked after his own special interests first of all. Several other people of like character had known how to sneak into the Grange as members, and it is solely their fault that the Grange organization in Nebraska finally broke up. Those who are still living today are found in Government service and, if I am correctly informed, the above-named Church Howe is now ambassador to Holland, in Europe. Fine officials--these!

## Chapter XIV

### HALL COUNTY SCHOOLS, 1864-1907

Concluding chapter, which deals with schools and their development. About the first instruction for children given in our settlement,--up to the year 1907 when the 50th anniversary celebration took place.

The first school in our settlement of course was a private school. A pioneer settler, Theodore Nagel, was the first teacher. Nagel was a teacher by profession, having been trained in Germany, but was ill-qualified to make a success as a practical farmer. In 1864 we had only four children old enough to attend school. These were my son Friedrich Stolley, seven years old, Wilhelm Stelk, same age, Christian Gottsche eleven years, and Lina Schoel, same age. (Christian Gottsche was murdered by the Indians in the year 1868, as described in a previous chapter.) Nagel received his pay as a teacher of our children in work which we, the fathers of the children did for him on his farm. He taught school in his log hut, which at the same time, however, served also as a hen house.

It so happened that the door to his house would not close very well and a little pig that he kept would now and then visit our pedagogue's combined living and schoolroom. Thus it happened that one day upon visiting his place I found that the animal had entered the building during teacher's absence and was rooting around with his snout in an almost empty flour sack. Frightened at my appearance he jumped around the room with the sack over his head, scattering flour in all directions.

Another time (on Sunday) it happened that it was nearly dinner time when I called on our teacher, Nagel. The floor, bare ground (only a very few settlers had boards, and rough unplanned boards at that, at that time) was cleanly swept, the table set for dinner. As Nagel was exceedingly hospitable, he kindly invited me to eat dinner with him, but I declined his invitation





### THE NORTH GATE OF STOLLEY PARK, 1937

Under the will of William Stolley the City of Grand Island was given first option to buy the plot of ground consisting of 42 to 82 acres of forest, with lanes, driveways, flower gardens and one of the most extensive plantings of different species of trees and shrubs in the state. The value placed on the property was \$50,000. Grand Island voted not to exercise the option and public spirited citizens of the town started a drive to raise funds to purchase the grounds and present it to the State of Nebraska as a State Park. Through the untiring efforts of the Chamber of Commerce, the *Daily Independent* and other civic minded groups and individuals, a total of \$25,740 was raised and paid into the fund. In appreciation of this effort, the heirs of William Stolley joined in the spirit and donated the balance.

On March 14, 1927, the Nebraska Legislature passed a resolution H. R. 282 accepting the gift of the park and designating it, Stolley State Park. Formal presentation and dedication ceremonies were held on the grounds October 16, 1927.



with thanks. Nagel then seated himself at the table, when suddenly something tumbled onto the table from the loghouse roof which was made of long grass and dirt. This was rapidly repeated several times and before long six young mice lay among the edibles on the table.

Nagel very peevishly swept them off the table with his forearm and elbow with the word, "The cursed mice have made another brood already."

Beneath the roughly built table it became lively among his chickens as they quickly gobbled up the naked mice so as to make immediate use of them in the production of eggs. Under these conditions and circumstances the first school training in our settlement, and what is more, in all Hall County, was imparted.

Our settlement made its first attempt to organize the first school district in Hall County under the state law in 1868. School District No. 1 in Hall County, Nebraska, originally consisted of the present District No. 1, most of the present District No. 2 (town of Grand Island) and all of District No. 74. However, all of the attempts toward organization that were undertaken at that time soon proved unlawful because the illegally elected school officers, in their autocratic way, for a number of years did things as they pleased. So the following rules were adopted:

1. Every voter in the school district shall pay \$2 annually into the school treasury.
2. For every forty acres of land owned by the settlers, \$1.50 shall be paid to the school fund annually.
3. On every \$100 estimated personal property, 1/4 per cent school tax shall be paid.

In 1870 District No. 1 was divided into two districts so as to enable all children to attend school. To this end the second frame schoolhouse, 14 x 18 feet, was built in the west end sub-district.

In April, 1872, our teacher's salary was raised to \$40 per month, and school was held nine months of the year in each of the schools.

In the years 1884, '85, and '86, a school tax of ten mills was levied to build a new brick schoolhouse in each sub-district. In September, 1886, both of the schoolhouses were completed and

given over to the education of children. The cost of both of these new buildings was \$4,515.07.

Soon thereafter, District No. 1 was divided into two independent school districts. The one lying to the west remained No. 1, the eastern district became No. 74, for in the meantime seventy-two other school districts had been organized in Hall County. Continuing with District No. 1 wherein I have been a director for the past thirty-five years, I will give the following facts concerning this school district in Hall County.

In 1893 the sum of \$1,200 was voted by the district to build a house and stable for our teacher, and an additional \$100 for the purchase of an acre of land that lay next to the school. On July 19, 1894, the house for the teacher, 22 x 28 feet and 14 feet high, with an addition of 12 x 16 feet and 10 feet high, was completed.

Up to 1880 our teacher was paid \$40 per month. In 1881, he received \$45; in 1882, \$50; in 1883, \$55, and from then until now (1907) \$60 per month for nine months of the year, besides free dwelling. No. 1 is the only school district in the State of Nebraska that furnishes the teacher with a free dwelling, a stable and also a garden, in addition to paying \$60 per month for nine months in a year.

According to the latest statistics furnished me by our Hall County school board, we now have (1907): 80 school districts, 133 teachers (mostly female teachers), 4,224 children enrolled who attend schools, 6,140 children lawfully entitled to attend school. The total value of all school properties in Hall County is \$238,803.57. The total sum paid to teachers in Hall County in 1906 was \$51,738.19.

In the city of Grand Island we note the following facts: The city has five brick and two frame schoolhouses. Forty-four teachers are engaged and in 1906, \$34,419.54 was expended for school purposes. Including private schools and colleges, the attendance of scholars in the town schools in 1906 was 2,600.

Hall County has approximately 20,000 inhabitants and the town of Grand Island, 10,000.

















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